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# *The Catholic Homiletic Society*

FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. DEC. 28-30, 1961

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# *The Catholic Homiletic Society*

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# REPORT ON

## Fourth National Convention of

# The Catholic Homiletic Society

**DECEMBER 28-30, 1961**

**Statler-Hilton Hotel**
**Washington, D.C.**

The Fourth National Convention of the Catholic Homilectic Society was called to order at ten-thirty on the morning of December 28th in the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Reverend Thomas V. Liske, President of the Society, gave the opening address which was followed by a lively discussion which centered on creating more interest in the Society, stimulating a higher level of performance in sacred eloquence and sharing educational techniques that have proved effective. There were also several practical suggestions for providing a recording secretary for the Conventions as well as a director of publicity for the Society, and for making available to the members a standard format for conducting preaching workshops.

At 12:15 the members assembled for luncheon in the Federal Room of the Statler-Hilton and Bishop Philip Hannan, Auxiliary of Washington, welcomed the Homiletic Society to the Nation's Capitol in the name of Archbishop O'Boyle. The main address at the luncheon was delivered by Most Rev. John Wright, Bishop of Pittsburgh, and constituted one of the highlights of the Convention. Bishop Wright stressed the complete involvement of the preacher in the work of preaching, the sermon representing a passionate personal commitment eloquently expressed.

In the afternoon session Father Fidelis Rice, C.P., famous Passionist preacher and producer of *The Hour of the Crucified* gave a paper on "The State of the Modern Parish Mission". This paper produced the liveliest discussion period of the Convention as pastors, professors and missionaries traded experiences and opinions with regard to the format, style and purpose of the parish mission and the new area mission. In the evening sectional meetings were devoted to the specific interests of

homiletics professors and practicing preachers. In the Seminary section Father Albin J. Gietzen, S.S., Professor of Homiletics at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Md. discussed the problem of how to teach skills fully to large speech classes in the Major or Minor Seminaries. In the Mission and Retreat Group Father Joseph O'Neill pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Beaverton, Ontario, Canada, discussed "The Pastor and the Missionaries during the Parish Mission" and Father John Bruni, M.S.C. from Sacred Heart Seminary, Shelby, Ohio, read a paper and led a discussion on "Standards of Judging a Retreat".

At 10:15 on the second day of the Convention, Friday, December 29th, Father Walter Burghardt, S.J. from Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md. presented a paper entitled "From Classroom to Pulpit; How Preach Dogma?" Father Burghardt's excellent theological background plus his experience as a radio preacher made this paper an outstanding contribution to the Convention. The discussion that followed centered on the rightful use of dogmatic manuals as a preparation for preaching and the function of biblical and kerygmatic theology. In the afternoon session at 2:30 Father John Williams, S.J., from St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Ill. gave a paper on "Diversity in the Format of Sunday Sermons—a Must!" Father Williams accompanied his paper with references to mimeographed copies of model sermons illustrating diverse formats. These sermons were distributed to the members of the Convention. The ensuing discussion bore out the practical purpose of Father William's paper as the members shared opinions on the problem of how to get the most out of the short Sunday-morning sermon.

Friday evening was devoted to another meeting of the special-interest groups. The Retreat and Mission group heard Father John A. Treinen, C.SS.R., a Missionary from St. Louis, Missouri, present a paper entitled, "Should We Missionaries Moderate Our Sermons on Sin and Guilt?" In the Seminary section Father John B. Hagerty from St. Mark's Seminary, Erie, Pa. discussed "The Ideal Speech Course in Seminaries", calling attention to the importance of forensics in the minor seminary as a preparation for the work of preaching. A social hour was held at the end of the evening sessions on both Thursday and Friday. Another feature of the Convention on the second day was the convening of the Nominating Committee for the purpose of selecting nominees for the election on the following day. Members of the Nominating Committee were Rev. John Cunningham, Rev. Anthony Peterman, S.J. and Rev. Joseph O'Neill.

On Saturday, December 30, at 10 P.M. the members convened for the final session of the Convention, the chief business of which was the election of officers. The Nominating Committee announced its recommendations:

For President: Very Rev. Msgr. John J. Cassels
For Vice-President: Rev. Pius Leabel, C.P.
For Secretary: Rev. Thomas D. Rover, O.P.
For Treasurer: Rev. Joseph T. Konkel.

The four nominees were elected and Monsignor Cassels took over as President of the Society, thanking the outgoing President, Father Thomas V. Liske, for his two years of splendid service and pledging himself to work for the expansion and perfecting of the still young and still growing Catholic Homiletic Society. For the Board of Directors the following members were nominated and elected: Rev. Oscar Miller, C. M. and Rev. Anatole Baillargeon, O.M.I.

At this final business meeting the following resolutions were adopted:
1) that a statement of gratitude should be expressed to those who contributed notably to the success of the Convention—to Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle and to his auxiliary, Bishop Philip Hannan, to Bishop John Wright, to Monsignor Thomas Grady of the National Shrine who graciously supplied the Mass equipment for the altar-room in the Hotel, to the Dominican and Claretian students for their help in staffing the registration desk and serving the Masses;
2) that regional meetings of the Society and workshops in Homiletics should be promoted in various parts of the country;
3) that the Society should encourage and support the writing of Homiletic articles in various clerical journals;
4) that the Society should encourage and support the translation of foreign articles dealing with Homiletic interests;
5) that the incoming president should appoint a person or a committee to provide for the systematic development of public relations for the Homiletic Society.

The business meeting and the Convention were adjourned at approximately 11:30 and a Board of Directors meeting was called for and held in the President's suite in order to plan the work of the Society during the coming year.

Father Thomas D. Rover, O.P.,
Secretary

# Presidential Address 1961

In this city last month the Bishops, assembled in their annual meeting, issued what must be regarded as the most authoritative statement on the state of religion in our country today.

In this the most dangerous period of the history of mankind, the Bishops declared:

> "Pervading all modern society has been the influence of secularism, the banishment of God from public and private life and the enthronement of human nature in His place. Under its influence men may not perhaps deny God; on formal occasions they may even mention Him. In practice, however, they simply ignore His existence.
>
> In rebuilding a sound religious and moral foundation for America, "the Bishops affirm," a special difficulty arises from the varied character of our society. .. . Especially we must recognize and affirm the essential place of religion and morality in the formation of human personality, if we are to survive as a moral people.
>
> Because we have so often faltered in our course and because the Communist nations have profited by our mistakes to inspire false ideals and awaken glittering and barren hopes, we must not be discouraged, imagining that our hour of opportunity has passed. It has not passed!"

The Bishops vehemently declare, "The hour of greatest opportunity is striking now, as the forces of freedom and of tyranny gird for a decision! At present when America is beset by so many frustrations, when there are so many temptations to despair, all who believe in God have the special duty of keeping alive within their own hearts and within the hearts of all men a true and undying hope.

The Christian today must have a profound sense of mission which will cause him to bear witness to his religious faith . . . as the early Christians did by deed even by death. Such was St. Paul's program of action, such too was St. Augustine's.

Like Paul we face a world largely paganized.

Like Augustine we see the encroachment of barbarism."

The Bishops conclude with this stirring direction: "Like Paul and Augustine we must be dauntless in proclaiming Christ."[1]

It is therefore the preachers of the Word of God who must achieve the goal set by the Bishops. It is especially the Catholic Homiletic Society which must be in the front line of attack. As we well know we are pledged as a Society to

> "assist priests in all fields of the sacred ministry in the most effective preaching of the Word of God, to promote by organized effort practical techniques in the teaching of homiletics, and to encourage research and publication in homiletic theory and practice."

As our First President and Founding Father, Father Joseph Connors of the Society of the Divine Word, said in his presidential address, "By these words of our Constitution, we are explicitly committed to do all we can to aid present preachers and those who train future preachers."[2]

In view of the urgency of the Bishops injunction I believe our present task is *first:* to make more priests in the pulpit more aware of the urgency to preach and preach well. Our people are a "trifle too self-satisfied and tend to ignore the lessons of the past and the problems of the future while living entirely in a pretty comfortable present."[3] That is because many of our priestly speakers do not know this is the age of speech. Must we be forced to remind ourselves "We are in the age of the Power of Speech; speech has changed the face of the world in the last fifty years or more; it has welded peoples together and torn them apart; it has destroyed their freedom and their religious activities; it has sent whole cities to death, it has made traitors and heroes, it has given obscure men complete control of whole nations; it has won and lost wars. In this battle of ideas and ways of life the man with the truth and goodness on his side cannot afford to be a poor speaker, an inarticulate bore wasting the time of his people while the world is falling apart. The priest must be the most effective of public speakers.[4]

There are some who dare to say we would be better off without the sermon at Mass! Such priests do not understand the power of speech, nor the force of the powers of evil arrayed against us! We need more Chryso-

1. The Brooklyn "Tablet," Nov. 30, 1961.
2. The Catholic Homiletic Society proceedings, Vol. 1, 1958.
3. Folliet, "World Catholicism Today," Newman Press, 1961, pg. 25.
4. Liske, "Effective Preaching," second edition, Macmillan, 1960, pp-2-3.

stoms. Chrysostom was supremely aware of the need of preaching well. He said, "It will be my praise if you transmit all my words into deeds. . . . I desire only this from you: proof through deeds, obedience through your works. That is my glory, that is your reward; that I treasure more than a prince's crown."[5]

Our second task is the content of the sermons. We are in a new era of history. One man has said, "It might be called the religious phase of history. By "religious" we do not mean men will turn to God, but rather that the Indifference to God has disappeared: either you know and acknowledge God or you do not! The struggle now is not for colonies or natural rights but for the souls of men!"

The battle lines are being drawn: the basic issues are no longer in doubt. It is either God—or Anti-Christ! These are the days of the degradation of man. There still echoes through the world the declaration of Feuerbach, "Man is only what he eats!" or the pronouncement of Marx, "Man is only a tool producing animal."

Never before in the history of mankind has the dignity of man been so imperiled. We face a stream of false teaching spreading through the country and the world, a teaching which strips man of his liberty, robs human personality of all its dignity and removes all moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse; a teaching that rejects God and annihilates the human person. "We have killed God!" screamed their Prophet Nietzsche. It is an anti human teaching. Marx actually stated his purpose was to destroy the spiritual nature of man. Doestoevsky said one important truth: man cannot organize the world for himself without God; without God he can only organize the world against man! This false teaching which can and does touch our people makes man a mindless, soulless, brutalized worker!

Only we, the preachers of the Word of God, can stem this tide. Only we can effectively form the true thinking of the nation. By being "dauntless in proclaiming Christ!" We have the true doctrine on the dignity of man which we must preach "in season and out of season. For the times are here "when they will not endure the sound doctrine, but having itching ears will heap up to themselves teachers according to their own lusts, and they will turn away their hearing from the truth and turn aside rather to fables." (2 Tim 4:)

"A wonderful piece of sculpture adorns the Cathedral of Chartres. It

5. Baur, O. S. B., "John Chrysostom and His Times 'Vol. 1, p 232, Newman Press, 1959.

represents Adam, head and shoulders barely roughed out, emerging from the earth from which he was made and being moulded by the hands of God. The face of the first man reproduces the features of God the moulder."[6]

In this parable in stone we have translated the words of Genesis: "God made man in His own image and likeness." From the earliest beginnings of Christianity we have recognized in this verse the first title of our nobility and the foundation of our greatness. God imparted to His creatures reason, liberty, immortality, and dominion over nature. Each of these prerogatives is meant to grow and unfold until the divine resemblance is brought to perfection.

In our sermons we must hold up to man a vision, the vision of his greatness as a human being!

We must preach to him that he was eternally selected to be!

That he has a special life throbbing in him, a life that shall tire time and breathe when he expires!

That he has a life supercharged with power from on high to do acts that have a value beyond this world.

That men are the sons of God, members of the Family of the Holy Trinity, brothers in the blood of Christ and heirs of Heaven!

That they have knowledge penetrating to the very source of knowledge, because God whispered to them the secrets of the universe!

That they can sweep aside all space and all time by saying, "Our Father Who art in Heaven . . ."

That they can hold intimate conversation with God!

That they are the very Temple of the Holy Spirit!

That they are the highest priced thing in all the world, because God died for them.

That they are immortal beings. Immortal beings who have more than a million years to live—but not on this earth!

That they are priceless, deathless, timeless!

This is the vision we must give them to sustain them all the days and nights of their lives. All the misery in their lives will be due only to the fading of the vision of their greatness. Yes, it can fade, for the world will interpose its own brand of vision, dark, murky visions that will becloud their minds and kill the hopes of their souls.

The world will offer three old visions! In the desert of the world it

6. De Lubac, S. J., "The Drama of Atheistic Humanism," Sheed & Ward, 1950, p. 3.

will offer them the vision of stones becoming bread—a vision of false prosperity. It will try to make man see himself as a child of earth, dazzled by the prospect of controlling energy to rid the world of all evils. It will offer a second vision: the vision of not dashing the foot against a stone—a vision of false security, a vision of man seeing himself as a sensual being only, tempting him to be reckless, to lose the sense of right and wrong. It would like to see man as a shooting star, brilliant, dashing, swift and reckless but falling to its death by fire, swerving too close to the earth . . . and falling to its death a horrible death by fire. . . . The third vision offered to man by the world and the spirit of evil is the vision of all the kingdoms of earth and the glory of them, a vision of man as a gainer of wealth alluring him to put gold in the wrong treasury to find it is all counterfeit gold.

In these times men have lost sight of their own greatness; they no longer esteem themselves highly, they do not regard themselves with awe. You find in the world many spiritless men, the inspiration has run out. A man without inspiration is really a souless man, a dull, melancholy, dismal citizen of a dull, melancholy, dismal world. He is insensible to the beauty and strength of justice, charity and peace. He is cowardly not daring to fight for virtue, afraid of being good. He is eyeless like Samson shaking the pillars and standing in the ruins. He is heedless that he is on a great errand bearing a most precious burden, heedless as a boy wandering aimlessly with leisurely pace taking his time to look at the flourishing world, his precious burden forgotten, no thought of the errand he is on, forgetting he must arrive before a certain time, letting death swoop down on him and overtake him where he is, with nothing done as if life had never been begun. Such a man is going to miss the most important vision of all—the last one!—the face to face vision of God in a life of happiness without end. . . .

Fathers of the Society, teachers and preachers, students, you must have a passionate love for the office of preaching in these times. You must have a soul of fire. The thousands of sermons preached in our country must say in effect what St. Gregory of Nyssa said: "O man, scorn not that which is admirable in you! You are poor in your own eyes, but I would teach you that you are great! Realize what you are! Consider your royal dignity! The Heavens have not been made in God's image as you have, nor the sun, nor the moon, nor anything to be seen in creation."[7]

Rev. Thomas V. Liske, S.T.D.

7. Gregory of Nyssa, In Cantica, Hom. 2.

# The Parish Mission In A Changing World

Father Fidelis Rice, C.P.
Our Mother of Sorrows Monastery,
West Springfield, Massachusetts.

Saint Paul, in his masterful Epistle to the Ephesians, reveals to us that every Christian must be the realization, in time, of an eternal and everlasting idea. Each of us has been present in the Mind of God, everlastingly. Each of us has been called upon to manifest the holiness of God in a completely unique way. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight, in charity." (Ephesians, i, 4) We have at the same time a common vocation and an entirely unique one. Each of us is to be holy, as Christ is holy, yet no two of us can be holy in quite the same way.

There is then a union of the eternal and the temporal in every human soul. The essential mission of the Church is always unchanged, but the modes and the channels by which that mission is carried out are always changing. For centuries the Church has been telling each successive generation of mankind, "Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return." Were we to be instructed to change the formula, somewhat, and on this Ash Wednesday to enjoin upon the Faithful, "Remember man thou are dust, and unto RADIOACTIVE dust thou shalt return," this would entail no change in the age-old mission of the Church. It would simply bring it up to date in the space-age.

The subject assigned to me by our illustrious President, Father Liske, is no easy one. He has asked me to speak on "The Parish Mission in a Changing World." One of the first principles that I have always insisted on, in teaching Homiletics is the very reliable discipline of "limiting the subject." An Indian proverb puts it somewhat differently when it says, "Begin at the beginning, or you will end at the beginning." May I, then, begin at the beginning by stating that I am a Passionist. What I say, then, will be concerned, primarily, with PASSIONIST Missions. In the nature of things, many of the problems are found in all Missions. But the only

kind of Missions I have ever preached has been a Passionist Mission. I can speak, then, only in this limited area of consideration.

What is a mission? What's it for? What does it aim at? In a very general way it partakes of the two-fold objective of all preaching: "To afflict the comfortable, and to comfort the afflicted." A Mission is a well-planned series of talks and spiritual exercises, with a very definite objective in mind. This objective is not merely the elucidation of a few interesting ideas. It is always the transformation of a person! Father McVann, in his book on the Canon Law of preaching, tells us: "Though each Society will have its own way of conducting Missions, all pursue the same aim of holding a series of stirring sermons on the great truths, for the purpose of restoring the faith of the people, rousing contrition for sin and breaking down vice; along with these penitential sermons there have always been elementary instructions on the chief dogmas, the commandments and the duties of various states of life." (The Canon Law on Sermon Preaching: The Paulist Press, 1940, page 149)

The Passionist Mission seeks to achieve these things by emphasizing, in a special way, the Passion of Christ, as the supreme example of the love of God. Indeed, Clement XIV, in the "Supremi Apostolatus," the magna carta of the Passionists, informs us that it was his great concern for the preaching of the Passion, (which he calls "summum et potentissimum divinae misericordiae sarcamentum"—"the supreme and most potent 'mystery' of the divine "mercy") which prompted him to give such solemn approbation to our Congregation. The Passionist must always, then, in his preaching, seek to bring comfort and solace and hope to troubled souls.

Missions, as all of us know, are not as popular as they used to be. Many of them no longer draw the vast crowds they once did. Not a few priests, and quite a few of the laity, have expressed the belief that "the day of missions is over." Or, "missions are on the way out." I presume that all of us have read letters and articles in the Priest, or the Homiletic Magazine, and in some of our diocesan papers, expressing loud protests over the way some missions have been conducted, about the subject-matter of the sermons, about the attitudes and the conduct of some missionaries.

Some of these articles and letters were justified. Others were not. Many of them revealed that their writers did not know what a mission was really FOR. They indicated that what was wanted was a Cana Conference, or a spiritual colloquy, or an Inquiry Forum. All of these are excellent Catholic activities. But they do not have the same object as a Mission. If I may quote Father McVann again, "Missions aim, primarily, at winning souls

to repentance and a Christian life, while parochial retreats are designed to bring them along the path to perfection." (Ibid. p 155)

It might be well to point out, also, that Missions are not arbitrary arrangements. They are prescribed by the Code of Canon Law, at least once in ten years, in each parish. (Cannon 1349, #1) The code states that the Ordinaries are to be vigilant in seeing to it that pastors arrange such missions, at least every ten years.

Although the law is explicit, there is no prohibition, certainly, against a frank discussion of the desirability of missions in modern parochial life. Are missions a thing of the past? Are they no longer needed? Can the modern Church, in the United States, dispense with a powerful call to penance and amendment of life? Does not modern man need to be reminded, as did his father and grandfather, of the primacy of the soul, the enormity of sin, the awful reality of eternity?

Surely the recent declaration of our American Bishops does not suggest a lessening of emphasis on the Eternal Truths: "The evidences of moral decline are everywhere to be seen: in the alarming increase in crime, particularly among the young; in the sensational treatment of violence and sexuality, in literature, on the stage, screen and television; in the disclosures of greed and cynicism in government, labor and business; in the stubborn continuance of race prejudice and injustice; in the multiplication of divorce, and in the rapid disintegration of the family; in a harsh and pagan disregard of the sacredness of human life, concealed under the mantle of science. . . .

"Many men are questioning, and often denying the objective distinction between good and evil, and the ability of human reason to know with certainty what is right and wrong. They are cutting themselves off completely from moral traditions. For the first time in history they find themselves without a moral law to break." (Statement of American Hierarchy, 1961)

We cannot comfort ourselves with the delusion that our Catholic people are not affected by this general breakdown in morality. For "no man is an island," and the paganism of our times affects all of us. Surely the need is even greater in our times than ever before that the warning of Christ be shouted from the housetops, "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke, xiii, 3) This is one of the principal works of a mission, to lead those who are in danger of eternal death to the life-giving Passion of Christ, and to His redeeming love. Those of us who have preached missions know only too well how wonderful are some of the

graces of repentance that are given lavishly by God during these holy missions.

However, this consideration leads us to one of the more common objections raised against missions in the modern parish. It is readily granted that there are vast numbers who need to be called to penance, who are in grave danger of eternal damnation, and who desperately need to make the mission. But these are not the people making the mission. For the most part, those who are there night after night, and morning after morning, are the good, holy, devout laity—the spiritual backbone of the parish. The missionaries threaten them with fire and brimstone, yet they live, habitually, in the state of grace. They are striving, at times with heroic efforts, to keep the commandments of God. It is ludicrous to stand before such people, and to taunt them with the challenge, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" The one thing on earth they want most of all is to save their souls. God knows they're trying! What they need is the encouraging gift of hope, not threats of damnation.

This is, of course, perfectly true, in many cases, and missonaries have got to adjust themselves to realities. They must be prepared to preach to the specific congregation before them, and not to the vast army which isn't there, and which is in such danger of hell and damnation.

The words which John XXIII uttered to the Lenten Preachers of Rome, in 1959, might well guide the preaching of all missionaries.

1. "God has called us to enlighten consciences, not to confuse or coerce them."
2. "God has called upon us to speak with the same simplicity with which the articles of the Apostles Creed are formulated; not to complicate matters, or to flatter the tastes of an audience."
3. "God has called upon us to heal our brothers, not to frighten them."

Before all else a missionary ought to be a man of deep compassion. He should reveal with every word he utters that he hates sin, but that he loves sinners far more. He is a consecrated instrument of the compassionate Heart of Christ. There is no room in the pulpit for any man who uses it to hurl snide insults at the people, or who scorns and ridicules his brothers who may be weak. All missionary preaching would be more effective if we used the first person plural a lot more, and the second person far less. "We who offend God, we who break His law; WE who are ungrateful," etc. is

far more effective than the unending rebuke of "YOU Mass-missers" "YOU ingrates," etc. It need hardly be pointed out, however, that the priest should not use the first-person plural in references which are unseemly in a priest!

The content of missionary preaching should be positive, not negative. If the preacher knows how to join genuine compassion with stirring condemnation of evil, he will not lose the sympathetic hearing of even the holiest members of the congregation.

The Saints, like our own St. Paul of the Cross, were able to preach to all kinds, and they could reach hardened sinners while at the same time leading holy souls to even greater heights of holiness. They knew the psychology of the people to whom they preached. But they also knew the Heart of Christ. They never forgot that Christ loves sinners. He doesn't just tolerate them. He died for them.

The Saints also knew Theology. They knew riches of the Christ-life. They knew the wonders of the Kingdom of God. Their sermons were flexible enough to reach all. They did this for their times. We must do it for our own!

Missions are not passè—but some missionaries are—or should be! If they have prepared a neat little kit of sermons, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago, which they go on repeating, in parish after parish, without any regard for a totally different psychology of place and time, then they are doing the greatest possible harm to their own apostolate. Every missionary, worthy of the name, should be an indefatigable "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He must be constantly re-writing his sermons. Missionaries are ordained. A juke-box need not be! If a priest is going to become a "push a button and out comes a sermon" type of missionary, then perhaps we might better go in for automation. You can always stop a machine if you don't like it!

A missionary knows, if he is alert, if he is not reaching the people. If he isn't reaching them it means he isn't speaking their language. He is not giving them what their souls need. In such cases, it doesn't make any difference how hard he may have slaved on a manuscript. It's far better to scrap it, and to speak to them simply, earnestly and persuasively of the love of God and His grace. We Passionists are particularly fortunate in that we can always speak of the Passion. And the Passion always has the power to move hearts and souls. One short meditation on the Passion can do far more to lead to a hatred for sin than the fire and brimstone contained in the depths of hell!

One other fact of modern life that we must face is that people want short sermons. This means self-discipline in a preacher. As John XXIII put it: "It means making your sermon long enough to instruct the faithful, not to match your pleasure in listening to yourself speak." (Address to Lenten Preachers, 1959) It is true that in former days people seemed to like lengthy discourses. But today they do not! It's not going to lead them closer to God to insist, "But they NEED longer talks, and I'm going to give them one." You might hold them in the pews, but you won't hold their minds, and you won't win their hearts to Christ. And that's why we're preaching, isn't it?

Our mission services could be shortened considerably if we'd cut out a lot of the folderol that isn't necessary to the Mission at all. Lengthy and atrociously humorous announcements went out of style years ago, with medicine-men—or they should have. Brief, concise and efficient announcements are very effective. Long and wordy announcements only annoy and irritate.

Years ago, before radio and television, our people would come to church and settle down for a fascinating evening. The mission father was an all-round personality. He was top-talent. But today we DO have radio and television, and it is folly for the missionary to attempt to compete with some of the top talent available at the pushing of a button. If the missionary will get into his subject immediately, and if he manifests the deep zeal of a priestly heart for the welfare of souls, he'll hold the people and he'll win souls.

There is one other major problem on which I want to touch briefly. That is, the people no longer come to missions. Why is this? There are many reasons. For the women, of course, there is the fear of going out nights. The only sensible adjustment in such cases is to have afternoon services.

Another reason might well be lack of preparation before hand on the parish level. If the priests of the parish just tuck in a brief announcement, before the bingo ad, the people might well get the idea that Father doesn't think the mission is too important. By way of contrast I cite this example of a new parish in Connecticut. The pastor there began special prayers for the success of the mission six weeks ahead of time. He sent out a personal letter to each parishioner. He got his Legion of Mary members to make house-to-house calls. He got the whole parish mission-conscious. The results were evident. The church and adjoining hall were bursting at the seams. The pastor got to know people "he didn't know lived in his

parish." Many marriages were corrected. There was a big increase in attendance at the Sacraments. And, incidentally, he had a big increase in the number of envelopes dropped in the basket each Sunday.

We need only look at the phenomenal success of Billy Graham to realize that people still want to hear what Protestants call "prophetical preaching." They are hungry for vital sermons on the eternal truths. But we need to remember, too, that much of Billy Graham's success is due to team-work. When he goes into a city he has been preceded by more than a tiny announcement tucked in somewhere near the coal collection. He has had a team of real professionals at work. They've used the newspapers, the radio, the television stations. Obviously they look upon his crusade as something really important and serious. We've got to convey that same sense of urgency to our people IF we really believe in the importance of the mission ourselves.

We're living in 1961. In three more days it will be 1962. We can't hope to achieve success with methods that worked in the 80's. We need all the techniques that modern advertising can suggest. For we are promoting the greatest product of all—the salvation of immortal souls.

2:30 Session: Fr. Fidelis Rice "State of the Modern Parish Mission."

Questions: Surprised not to have heard a word here about "area missions" such as given in Europe. . . .Could we consider their being an answer to the problems that beset our parish missions of today?

Answer: My name: Fr. Anatole Baillargeon, O.M.I. of Natick, Mass. With a confrere of mine who is present, Fr. O. Fortier, O.M.I., I have participated in two area missions in Canada. On one of these missions, we were seven Oblates from New England who took care of the preaching in the English-Speaking parishes of the diocese.

An area mission, or "Grande Mission" as it is called in Europe where it originated (Italy first, then France) seeks total coverage of a diocese at one time—saturation bombing by a fleet of well-trained preachers in a highly-organized diocese after an intense preparation stretching over a period of one to two years.

The *purpose*: a renewal of the faith in a given area by

mobilizing every parish at the same time—esprit de corps—an intense moment of truth when God's grace meets with a united response from a well-disposed people.

The *means*: a willing bishop, diocesan committees, parish committees, clerical committees, sociological surveys of every parish; TV, radio and press propaganda and last, but not the least, a band of some 75 or 80 preachers supple enough to adapt themselves to the exigencies of an area mission: door-bell operations; Mass and preaching in shops, manufactures and stores etc. . . . .

In one diocese, there had been a preliminary meeting of the larger number of preachers who were to take part, with the bishop. This meeting lasted three days: objectives, sermon outlines, talks by Fr. Motte, O.F.M. general chairman in France of area missions. This took place four months before the Big Event.

However, due to prior commitments of pastors and preachers for their Lenten Missions, when the area mission preachers arrived for their ten-day (in May) stint, they found to their dismay that the regular annual missions had been given just six weeks prior to their arrival. Parishioners were not ready to return to Church for another ten days. The turn-out in general was poorer than what it usually is in an average mission. A sad lack of coordination on the higher echelon sabotaged the area mission in this diocese. May was not the right month; wrong time for everyone, including the preachers who had just completed a lengthly period of preaching in other areas. The very simple cancellation of the parish missions in Lent would have changed the aspect considerably and increased the hopes of success.

In the second diocese where we worked, conditions were different. The preparation was exhaustive, stretching over a period of more than two years. No missions occurred in this time. The surveys of every parish had depth—parish committees had weekly or monthly meetings; the priests were reunited several times and briefed on the diverse aspects of the mission: what it was, what was expected of them, of the Missionaries, of the people.

A three day retreat was made by all the preachers con-

gregated in the diocesan retreat house; exchanges of ideas were frequent; more briefings by the two diocesan priests who had been working exclusively for several months at this task and finally, the take-off!

One half of the diocese was covered in a three week period, followed by a week's rest; then the second half by another two or three week period of work.

Masses were said in 50 of 52 manufactures in the diocese, preceded by lengthy sessions of confessions in the shops or mills themselves during working hours. House-to-house visits, total coverage in small parishes (up to 600 families) and visits to designated homes in larger ones; gatherings of the youth in parish halls for special instructions followed by open discussions; evening exercises limited to a 30 minute instruction followed by a brief ceremony: proclamation of the Word of God with blessing of the Bible; an actual baptism in the sanctuary: renewal of baptismal vows and marriage vows, blessing of the bread, etc. . . .

Results? Mixed. The human elements still prevalent at all levels. The time chosen was good: Oct. 1st, to Nov. 15th. The preparation was adequate on the diocesan level, not so in several parishes where committees were more or less inactive or non-existent.

Where the preachers followed instructions and went out to the people and preached, not their respective devotions or set sermons according to the patterns set by their congregations, but preached the topics prepared for them and varied their format every evening *according to instructions,* the results were very good if not excellent in some instances. This was something special. Weeks of propaganda had awakened the interest of the people and they expected much. Wherever they were let down in the week or weeks of actual mission, they hit bottom with a bang. "No difference with the usual thing." "Same old themes chanted in the same old tunes." A lack of resiliency, of adaptation, of conformity to orders from above diminished when it did not destroy whatever chances of success this venture may have had.

It takes a man of God to do the work of God, no matter how many extra human means are employed. The word of

God must be preached, not the word colored to the point where it is totally identified with the brown, black or white habit of the one who preaches it according to patterns that were highly successful in the 18th and 19th Centuries. God's Word today by Men of God!

# From Classroom to Pulpit: How Preach Dogma?

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The present paper is born of complaint and perplexity. The complaint issues from the pews, the perplexity from the seminary.

First, the complaint from the pews. The contemporary Catholic has a twin attitude towards the contemporary pulpit: he is scandalized and/or he is bored. By the "pulpit" I do not mean the special occasion, the novena, the mission; I mean our bread-and-butter preaching, the Sunday-after-Sunday sermon. And by the "Catholic" I do not mean the lax and the liberal, the sophisticate and the dilettant; I mean the average layman, reasonably intelligent, normally charitable, with no ax to grind, content with any edible crumb that falls from the pulpit.

This Catholic is scandalized by the pulpit, because what is most characteristic of the Christian message, what is most meaningful in God's self-revelation, is too often not given him. He gets the hour of baptism, but not its symbolism; the sins against marriage, but not St. Paul's "great mystery"; hell yes, but not heaven; the seductions of the flesh, but not the role of the flesh in man's redemption; the death that is sin, but not the life that is grace; the sacrifice of self and of money, but not the Sacrifice of the Mass. In a word, he is not getting dogma; he is not getting the richness, the vast sweep, of Catholic theology.

And when he is not scandalized, he is bored. Where dogma is preached —as often it is by episcopal mandate and chancery outline—it is rarely preached effectively. (I have heard a five-minute command performance on "The Lutheran and Catholic Conceptions of Justification.") The language is dry, abstract, technical, unattractive. The vocabulary is surprisingly limited. There is little evidence of proportionate preparation, little organization: the preacher goes round and round in ever-widening concentric circles. The idea does not come across clearly; the essence is

not extracted from it; it does not move, does not thrill; it stupefies, it petrifies, it paralyzes.

So far the complaint from the pews. The perplexity issues from the seminary. The modern seminarian is quite concerned: How bridge the gap between classroom and pulpit? Good will, zeal, he has in abundance, full to the brim and flowing over. What he lacks is a technique, a method. He is touchingly eager to transform the minds and hearts of a whole little world; his problem is, how? At times he is depressed: he suspects that there is no technique, that there is no method. Seminary theology bores him; will it not bore his people? He has seen good priests fail, the fervid go slack, the sanguine cynical. At times he is manic: the problem is the hothouse atmosphere of the seminary; all will be resolved when he returns to reality, when he faces people and not books, when human beings lift their eyes to him in burning yearning for the message of salvation.

The present paper proceeds on several suppositions: (1) there *is* a gap between the classroom and the pulpit; (2) the gap can be bridged; (3) no amount of real contact between a real preacher and a real congregation is an adequate substitute for a technique.

The present paper does not pretend to be the definitive technique. I doubt that there is any such miracle-whip, a definitive technique valid for all sermons, for all preachers, for all audiences. I shall simply detail one technique, one approach—an approach which has this to commend it: it works. It works for me; it has been found useful by other preachers; it has drawn warm approval from the pews. And it is a definite method: concrete, organized, detailed. The proof, of course, will be only in the preaching.

On broad lines, I have two points to make in this paper: *what* and *how*. To some extent they will overlap—inevitably; but there you have the two main facets of this technique, as of any technique: what and how.

## WHAT

The most saddening question put to me by young priests on the morrow of ordination is "What do I preach?" My unvarying response is as short as it is startling: "You preach theology." In the ordinary course of events, a fair amount of time, a significant section of a priest's life between ordination and death, should be occupied with the task of transmitting orally to his little world the revelation that was originally given to the whole world by the Son of God. And here, I insist, the stress should be on dogma rather than morality, on belief rather than conduct, on

thought rather than action. Not because morality, conduct, action are unimportant; they are not. Rather because morality is meaningless without proportionate motivation, and the proper motivation for genuinely Catholic living is discoverable only in authentically Catholic dogma, Christian faith, intelligible and attractive.

Not long ago an admirable priest, pastor of a suburban parish, said to me: "I expect to get as a curate this year one of the newly ordained priests. I'm going to tell him: 'Father, I'm not interested in how much theology you know; I want you to meet the people.'" The retort discourteous might have been: "When he meets the people, what do you want him to say?" The retort courteous is summed up in a sentence from a perceptive lay reviewer of Ronald Knox's *Pastoral Sermons,* Frederick E. Flynn, head of the department of philosophy at St. Thomas College, St. Paul, Minnesota. Said Dr. Flynn: "the best sermons are the fruit of sound theological scholarship seasoned with a deep personal meditation on the mysteries." More in detail the same reviewer observed:

> Monsignor Knox . . . is no arouser of religious ecstasy. He does not try to incite fervor through the synthetic appeals of italianated prose: he seems to take the somewhat civilized view that burning and bleeding hearts belong more in the abattoir than in divine worship. Similarly, one can look in vain in his *Sermons* for such unctuous phrases as "Holy Mother the Church" which some preachers use as carelessly and frequently as sailors use obscenities to conceal their inability for sustained communication. Rather he lifts the heart by appealing to the mind—an appeal which is more calculated to inform than to dazzle. Those fortunate enough to hear these *Sermons* must have come away with the agreeable feeling that Monsignor Knox paid them the Christian courtesy of regarding them as reasonably intelligent; that in appealing to their minds he was only asking them to respect the reflection in themselves of what they worship in God—His luminous Intelligence.[1]

Granted that my primary task must be to preach dogma, granted that my basic appeal must be to the intelligence, what concretely do I say? Suppose my task, by choice or command, is to speak on heaven: where do I begin? Risking my reputation, I confess it: I begin with a textbook. In this instance, Van Noort's *Tractatus de novissimis.*[2] It need not be Van Noort; it might be Lennerz; it could be Hervé or Tanquerey, Pesch or

1. Frederick E. Flynn, in *The Catholic Messenger* (Davenport, Iowa) Aug. 4, 1960, p. 13.
2. G. Van Noort, *Tractatus de novissimis,* ed. J. P. Verhaar (Hilversum: Soc. anon. Pauli Brand, 1935) pp. 15-37.

Sagüés—almost any text with an imprimatur will do. Why begin with a textbook? I give you six reasons.

First, here is where I discover, easily and clearly, what Catholic doctrine on heaven is—what, therefore, *must* be preached. If anything is preached on heaven, this must be preached. I find this Catholic doctrine in two theses. One thesis concentrates on the existence of heaven: "The souls of the just who have nothing left to atone for, are admitted immediately to the beatifying vision of God." The other thesis specifies the nature of heaven: "The blessedness of heaven consists essentially in the intuitive vision of God, which is called beatifying." If I preach on heaven, I must preach these theses. Why? Because, if I preach on heaven, I must at least say *that* heaven is and *what* heaven is.

Second, here is where I discover, easily and clearly, what this doctrine *means*. Call it "prenotes," call it definition of terms, call it what you will: here is where I learn what heaven means, what blessedness or beatitude means, what vision means. Here I learn, for example, that the intuitive vision of God is called beatifying because the intuitive knowledge brings with it the most intense love, because from this intimate possession of a God intensely loved joy springs, sweet enjoyment.

Third, here is where I discover, easily and clearly, pertinent corollaries and scholia which *may* be preached: for example, the whole question of nonessential but awfully exciting aspects of blessedness like the knowledge and love we are to have of others besides God; I mean, our Lady, the saints, my dear ones.

Fourth, here is where I discover what should *not* be preached. Some matter should not be preached because it is the object of controversy among theologians: be careful, for one thing, how you express yourself on the relationship of love and knowledge in the blessedness that is heaven. Some matter should not be preached because, though important, it is highly technical—lecture material rather than homiletic: the light of glory, for example. Some matter should not be preached because it is of no particular significance: the aureoles, or crowns of glory, or halos for martyrs, virgins, and doctors.

Fifth, here is where I discover the significant, pertinent Scripture texts, like St. John's pithy, inexhaustible assertion: "We shall see Him just as He is" (1 Jn 3:12).

Sixth, here is where I discover appropriate quotations from the Fathers of the Church, from theologians like St. Thomas, from the Roman Catechism, from magisterial documents.

This is your basic material, the matter which you are to fashion to a certain form. And what more can you ask? Here you have, gathered for you in one place, (1) what must be preached; (2) what it means; (3) what may be preached; (4) what should not be preached; (5) texts from Scripture; (6) texts from Fathers, theologians, and the Church.

But, as yet, I do not have a sermon; I simply have the material, the raw stuff, out of which a sermon may be shaped. If it is true that "the best sermons are the fruit of sound theological scholarship," it is likewise true that this scholarship must be "seasoned with a deep personal meditation on the mysteries." In my prayer life, in my ceaseless meditation, lies the remote preparation for my sermon on heaven; for there I tear the thesis from the textbook and make it part of my personal living, my day-to-day thinking. A more proximate step is to *mull*—to mull over heaven with this specific sermon in mind. Does anything in that wealth of material, in that embarrassment of riches, strike me, fascinate me, race my pulse, refuse to let me rest until I grasp it, until I express it? On the other hand, what are the needs of my people, the facets of heaven that clamor for expression in contemporary Christianity?

One sure-fire approach is to start with a problem. Not an artificial problem, but a problem that genuinely vexes the human mind. A problem not only for the audience, but preferably for the preacher as well. On Christmas, for example, I begin like this:

> There is a problem to Christmas—a paradox. Some would call it a flat contradiction. One side of the paradox was sung by Christ's angels, His messengers, the midnight of His birth: "Peace on earth to men of good will" (Lk 2:14). *Peace.* The other side of the paradox was preached thirty years later by Christ Himself: "Do not imagine that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have come to bring a *sword,* not peace" (Lk 12:51).[3]

Similarly for heaven. One distressing problem is this: for most Catholics, heaven is more baffling and more boring than hell. Distressing, because this is to be their life, their endless life. Distressing, because this should be their comfort in crisis, in catastrophe. Can I make heaven intelligible and attractive? To do that, I must combine three singularly difficult tasks: (1) the theology must be accurate; (2) the idea must be intelligible; (3) the language must be exciting.

Yes, intelligible and exciting. And this summons up my second point:

3. From "The Christmas Paradox," in Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., *All Lost in Wonder: Sermons on Theology and Life* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1960) p. 47.

not the what but the how—composition, writing. When you preach Catholic dogma, you cannot say anything really new; you dare not! Therefore, you have to say the old in a new way. A fresh approach. Language that lives and breathes.

## HOW

In a recent novel, *The Devil's Advocate,* Bishop Aurelio of Valenta, a man of fine insight and understanding, says to "the devil's advocate," Msgr. Blaise Meredith:

> . . . We have a language of our own . . . formal, stylized, admirably suited to legal and theological definition. Unfortunately we have also a rhetoric of our own, which, like the rhetoric of the politician, says much and conveys little. But we are not politicians. We are teachers—teachers of a truth which we claim to be essential to man's salvation. Yet how do we preach it? We talk roundly of faith and hope as if we were making a fetishist's incantation. What is faith? A blind leap into the hands of God. An inspired act of will which is our only answer to the terrible mystery of where we came from and where we are going. What is hope? A child's trust in the hand that will lead it out of the terrors that reach from the dark. We preach love and fidelity, as if these were teacup tales—and not bodies writhing on a bed and hot words in dark places, and souls tormented by loneliness and driven to the momentary communion of a kiss. We preach charity and compassion but rarely say what they mean—hands dabbling in sickroom messes, wiping infection from syphilitic sores. We talk to the people every Sunday, but our words do not reach them, because we have forgotten our mother tongue. It wasn't always like this. The sermons of St. Bernardine of Siena are almost unprintable today, but they reached hearts, because the truth in them was sharp as a sword, and as painful. . . .[4]

At this stage of my homiletic method I am ready to write; for the material is there to be worked, to be molded. I have my general subject: heaven. I know what it means: I have at my finger tips, or in my mind, Catholic doctrine on heaven accurately and intelligibly. By meditating and mulling I have come up with a basic idea, my specific theme: heaven is perfect fulfilment, everything a human being could wish for, mind and heart, days without end. Now I am ready to write—almost.

Before I write, I read again. This time not theology but literature. For I want a feeling for beauty, for insight, for the imaginative; I want a sense of the sacredness of words. It might be the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* or an act from T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party*. It might be Gerard

4. Morris L. West, *The Devil's Advocate* (New York: William Morrow, 1959) pp. 81-82.

Manley Hopkins' comparison of the Blessed Virgin to the air we breathe, or Newman's *Second Spring*. It might be a short paragraph: Augustine's "Late have I loved thee" or Theresa's "If a wild flower could talk." It might even be music that sets the mood: Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* or Mary Martin in *The Sound of Music*. It might well be Laurence Olivier reproducing Henry V's soliloquy on the burden of kings. Because, when I write, I do not want to sound like a page from Pohle-Preuss or a decision of the Rota; I want to sound like a prophet who has salvation on his tongue. I do not want to be cold, phlegmatic, apathetic; I want to be straining at the bit, impatient; I want to agonize over ideas, over words; I want to flame inside. At that point I am ready to write.

First, I write *everything* that comes into my head on the specific idea: heaven as perfect fulfilment—knowledge and love—intense joy—forever. I write everything that comes into my head, in any order or none. Facts, ideas, discoveries, anecdotes, phrases, words, poetry—everything.

From this mass of material I draw an *outline*: these are the significant ideas that emerge, and this is the order in which I want to handle them.

Then I *sort* the material with that outline in view. Some is pertinent; some is not. This facet of the material goes with that; this belongs here.

Then I begin to write in an *orderly*, methodical way. Not necessarily the introduction first—unless it comes spontaneously or emerges from the material now. But I write in methodical fashion the body of the sermon, the several points which develop my primary proposition.

When the first draft is finished, I do a *rewrite* job: make sure the ideas are lucidly clear; check to see if the words chosen express exactly what I mean; cut out what is not essential, not pertinent, not helpful—words, phrases, sentences, whole paragraphs; work beauty into it, power, vividness.

When I am tempted to think the sermon finished, then I write it *once again*. And here is what emerges in the concrete. For, since the technique can only be tested in the product, I presume to lay before you an actual sermon on heaven produced by this method, preached to a radio audience, and printed in a book of sermons, all of which have the same history.

EXAMPLE

## COME, BLESSED OF MY FATHER [5]

In Catholic thinking there is a strange paradox. For many of us, hell is a reality, heaven is not. Oh yes, we believe in both. We believe that the

5. Reproduced in its entirety from *All Lost in Wonder* (cited above, footnote 3) pp. 215-20.

Son of God will not only thunder "Depart from me, cursed ones, into everlasting fire" (Mt 25:41) ; we believe He will murmur "Come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you" (Mt 25:34) . But "everlasting fire" provokes a picture; the picture is terrifying; and because I am terrified, I want no part of hell. But "the kingdom of heaven" is a colorless phrase; there is little for my imagination to feast on, little to attract me; and because I am not attracted, I am not sure I want any part of heaven. Heaven and hell both repel me, but for different reasons. Hell repels me because it frightens me; heaven repels me because it baffles and it bores me. The poet Francis Thompson captured the problem in eight strong lines entitled *Heaven and Hell*:

> "'Tis said there were no thought of hell,
> Save hell were taught; that there should be
> A Heaven for all's self-credible.
> Not so the thing appears to me.
> 'Tis Heaven that lies beyond our sights,
> And hell too possible that proves;
> For all can feel the God that smites,
> But ah, how few the God that loves! " [6]

This morning I shall try to make heaven a little more meaningful to you. For the more you grasp its meaning, the more attractive will heaven grow.

My first affirmation is quite abstract, but it is awfully important. Heaven is fulfilment; for heaven is desire sated, heaven is happiness at its most perfect, joy undying. In this life there simply is no perfect fulfilment. There is always something I want and cannot have. Or I can have it, but it will mean an agony of achievement. Or, when I do achieve it, I cannot possess it as completely as I should like. Or I do possess it completely, but it grows bitter in my grasp; it palls, and I look for something else, for something more satisfying. And even if I am satisfied, there is still the realization that this is not for ever; this will pass; this will grow old; this will die. I may be content, but I am not complete. It matters not where my happiness lies—in dollars beyond counting, in power beyond resisting, even in the many-splendored thing called love. Happiness in this world is like man in this world: it is a finite and a fleeting thing.

Not so heaven. What I am made for, that I shall have. Whatever I can want when in heaven, that shall be mine. Not for an uncertain moment, trembling like quicksilver in my grasp. No, fulfilment will be mine

6. Francis Thompson, "Heaven and Hell," in *Francis Thompson, Poems and Essays*, ed. Wilfred Meynell (Westminister, Md.: Newman, 1949) p. 219.

forever. Take the happiest hour you have ever lived, multiply it in intensity a thousand times, prolong it till time be no more—and you will have a faint suggestion of the happiness that is heaven.

All well and good; but what is this fulfilment in the concrete? What is it that will make me so devastatingly happy? The answer is at once a confession of profound ignorance and an assertion of thrilling truth. The confession of ignorance is the admission of St. Paul. Here was a man who "was caught up into paradise and heard secret words that man may not repeat" (2 Cor 12:4). And this man had to confess: "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). Of course heaven is mysterious, beyond human imagining. For the thrilling truth about heaven is this: heaven, at its simplest, is God.

Heaven is God. But not as we grasp God now. Here below, man's knowledge of God is a pale and bloodless thing. Here below, I have an *idea* of God: He is Supreme Being; He is infinite; He is unchangeable; He is everywhere; He is all-good; He knows all things. At times there is more. At times I spy Him in the gentle rain and I hear His voice in the thunderbolt; mortal man has touched Him in the flesh of Christ; my tongue has pillowed Him, and my heart has been His home; my mind is glutted with His revelation. But even then I must confess with the prophet Isaiah: "Indeed thou art a hidden God" (Is 45:15).

Not so in heaven. John the Evangelist summed it up when he wrote: "we shall see Him just as He is" (1 Jn 3:2). Just as He is. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: three Persons, one God; I shall see Him just as He is. Not with my eyes of flesh, the way I look lovingly on my mother or gaze in fascination on a star. It is my mind that will possess Him—not a picture of God, not an idea of God, but God Himself. My mind will come into immediate contact with the living God—nothing between us, not even an idea. We have never had this kind of knowledge; the closest thing to it is the way I know myself; but even that is a far cry from the vision that is heaven. I shall know God somewhat as God knows Himself.

And my knowledge of God will have but one rival, one equal: and that is my love. For this contact between God and man is a contact between persons, not airy, unsubstantial shapes. In heaven we have not a cold meeting of minds but a warm, intimate friendship. This is union at its most perfect, this is love at its loftiest. Here at last man must, and God can, give in total abandon.

Heaven, then, is God: God within us in incredible knowledge, in breathless love. That is why we can make our own the poetic insight which a perceptive nun has shared with us under the title *Discovery*:

"It's this that makes
My spirit spin,
My bones to quake,
My blood run thin,
My flesh to melt
Inside my skin,
My very pulse
Create a din—
"It's this that makes
My spirit spin:

That Heaven is
Not *up*, but *in*! " [7]

Stranger still, the ecstasy of that first moment of knowledge, the rapture of that first moment of love, will never dull. Do you recall the legend of Michelangelo's Moses? They tell us that when Michelangelo gave the final stroke to his Moses, he stepped back from the statue; he looked, and he was transfixed in rapture. So alive was it, so vital, that he hurled his hammer at his creation and cried: "Speak!" Take that moment, make it endless, transform the lifeless Moses into the living God—and you may begin to suspect what we mean by eternal ecstasy, unceasing delight.

There is much else in heaven. I shall see, transfigured far beyond Thabor, the flesh of the lovable Lord who lived and died for me: the smile on His lips, the wound in His side; but, unlike Peter, James, and John, I shall not be afraid. I shall find a gracious Lady, and like Elizabeth of old I shall whisper in wonder: "How have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43). I shall live unendingly with apostles like Andrew, with confessors like Columban, with martyrs like Thomas More, with intellectuals like Augustine and humble priests like the Curé of Ars: yes, with angels like Gabriel. I shall love my dear ones as Christ our Lord loves His mother. But it will always remain true that heaven is, above all, God: "through Him and with Him and in Him" I shall give of my heart to all others.

To me it is significant that those men and women have yearned most for heaven who have loved most, who have tasted God's love for them and burn with love in return. Take St. Ignatius of Antioch. It is about the year 110. Ignatius is in chains, on the road to Rome, to death by wild beasts in the Colosseum. And he begs the Christians of Rome not to use their in-

7. Sister Mary Ignatius, "Discovery," in *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* 77, no 2 (Feb., 1942) 58.

fluence with the state, not to show him what he calls "unseasonable kindness." No, he writes:

> "Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, which are the means of my making my way to God. God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground, that I may prove Christ's pure bread. . . . I would rather die and come to Christ than be king over the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; Him I love who rose again because of us. . . . Do not make a gift to the world of one who wants to be God's. . . . My Love has been crucified, and I am not on fire with the love of earthly things. But there is in me a 'Living Water' which is eloquent and within me says: 'Come to the Father.' " [8]

> My dear friends: A saintly bishop, centuries ago, used to caution his people: Don't worry where hell is, but how to stay out of it! May I offer a similar gem of advice about heaven? Don't worry how God can possibly keep you happy in heaven; make it your concern to get there!

I have presented a "technique" for the "preaching" of theology, and an example of a sermon constructed on that technique. In conclusion I have two supplementary recommendations. The first has to do with the mind, the second with the will.

First, the preaching of theology should be stimulated by the theology of preaching. What every seminarian needs is theological reflection on preaching—an investigation, at the theological level, of the ministry of the word. The British theologian Charles Davis has put the problem forcefully and persuasively:

> Discussing practical techniques, it is said, is not enough; what is wanted is a genuine theology of preaching. When we enter the pulpit, we are ministers of a mystery, engaged in a saving event that is part of the history of salvation. Only theology, faith seeking understanding, can do justice to an activity that cannot be understood or exercised as if it were an affair of human eloquence. Handbooks on preaching should not be mere manuals of sacred rhetoric but should give a theology of the mystery of preaching. Seminarists have been taught preaching merely by means of practical exercises. No one would dream of dismissing the sacraments in that way. Just as seminarists are taught the doctrine of the sacraments as well as given practical lessons in their administration, so they must be taught about preaching, its meaning and efficacy, and not receive only practical advice on technique. . . .[9]

8. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 4, 1; 6, 1; 7, 2; translated by James A. Kleist, in *Ancient Christian Writers* 1 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1946) 81-83.
9. Charles Davis, "The Theology of Preaching," *Clergy Review* 45 (1960) 524-25.

Concretely, how can a priest preach intelligently if he does not know what preaching is, what its role is in the structure of the Church? Is preaching a direct cause of grace or is it only an occasion of grace? If it is a direct cause of grace, how does it differ from the sacraments? How is the efficacy of preaching affected by a priest's learning or ignorance, his holiness or sinfulness, his preparation or laziness, the profundity of his faith or the depth of his doubts? Unless the preacher has some grasp, at least minimal, of these problems and their solutions, we must come to the embarrassing conclusion: this man in the pulpit, this man mediating Christ to his congregation, does not really know what he is doing.

My second recommendation: "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." The born preacher is a relative rarity; most good preachers are made. I never cease to be impressed by the slavery that seems essential for success in the more profane professions. Take the theatre; I pick up a clipping from an old copy of *Time;* the Cinema section writes up Claire Bloom. One paragraph reads:

> Claire Bloom's sad, almost tragic sweetness, which wrings the hearts of her masculine audience and is the envy of more obviously beautiful but less accomplished actresses, was not bestowed on her by a fairy godmother. She worked for it. All she ever wanted to be was a great actress, in the Bernhardt and Duse tradition. She has emptied her life of everything except the theater. While other little girls learned about life by playing, she was learning her trade by working at it. She still works at it—and long past union hours. To improve her carriage, she studies ballet. To improve her speaking voice, she studies singing. To improve her actress' understanding, she reads endlessly, from Euripides to Shaw.[10]

Is there anything comparable to this in the life of a priest? Admittedly, few priests can empty their lives of everything save the pulpit. But frankly, how many of us may legitimately be excused from all study of theology? How many of us read for any purpose save relaxation and awareness of current events? How many of us mull over theology as we walk the streets or ride the bus? How many still treasure spare moments as precious pearls? How many priests have paid for voice training, for professional criticism, for speech and sermon courses? How many priests look upon the pulpit as a burden from which they crave release?

In all honesty, I know no easy way to effective preaching; my own experience has been "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." If the career of Claire

10. *Time,* Nov. 17, 1952, p. 80.

Bloom leaves you unmoved, then listen to the sports columnist Red Smith. "Writing a column is easy," he once said. "You just sit at your typewriter until little drops of blood appear on your forehead." The burden can indeed be lightened by harnessing to this single task disparate facets of priestly existence. I mean a ceaseless concern for theology, prayerful meditation on Christian revelation, high-level reading habits, mulling as an avocation, a husbanding of time, respect for the sacredness of words, dissatisfaction with one's progress, openness to criticism (especially from the laity), and self-discipline. But this itself, you will admit, is hard work!

One final suggestion. Preachers have discovered, to their delight and embarrassment, that the most likely atmosphere in which to capture an idea is a chapel. I recommend it unreservedly, not merely as a desperation measure, a last resort, but as a source of frequent recourse in the composition of a sermon. Not that God is not everywhere, but because on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament a human being is more humble, less likely to think of himself as a "first cause," more ready to let his Creator be his author.

# Diversity in the Format Of the Sunday Sermon —A Must

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Recently, a professional TV friend of mine, pretty much with tongue-in-cheek asked: "Why do so many priests in the pulpit on Sunday ride a hobby-horse?" Although I knew the import of his remark I let him expand his question—after all he does make his living professionally by talking! "Well, take my own parish as an example," he said. "The youngest assistant apparently has gone all out and way out on the new Scripture approach. Regardless of the topic, he is constantly and week after week explaining the new theories and looks askance at the traditional interpretations of the Scriptures. Why he's riding herd on us every Sunday and seems to be out-saddling Matt Dillon!" My friend paused to catch my reaction, but I let him go on. "Now take the older assistant, obviously he's very much interested in the liturgical movement. So every Sunday in his sermon we have a liturgical explanation of the Mass, the feast-day, the season of the year." Before I could answer, my friend launched into the pastor his favorite unhappy boy. "He's interested primarily in the finances of the parish. It's some phase of the money problem just about every Sunday!"

A college-trained housewife, the mother of seven children, once told me: "The Sunday sermons in our parish are all the same—as dull as can be and about as imaginative as a basketful of fog!" Finally, a clerical friend of mine commenting on some of the Sunday sermons he has heard while making his thanksgiving after Mass or preparing for the next Mass, stated: "Too many of the sermons are re-hashes of the late, late Saturday movie on TV, such as 'The Count of Monte Cristo' or more appropriate for this season, 'The Other Wise Man' or 'Going My Way.' "

Perhaps these comments are too severe and critical, but I leave this to your good judgment. They do seem to indicate that Sunday preaching leaves much to be desired. As teachers in the seminary and those vitally concerned with the status of preaching, we should do all in our power to train young seminarians, to warn them of somewhat prevalent attitudes, and to inspire them to go out and do much better than some of us "oldsters." Perhaps some of us have ridden that "hobby-horse" on occasion, but I suspect that on occasion all of us have been somewhat drab, dull, dreary, and somewhat deadly in our approach or handling of the assigned topic in the syllabus of sermons. Little wonder, then, that although the faithful fulfill their Sunday obligation of hearing Mass, they are sometimes bored to death with the sermon and seek somekind, anykind of willful distractions while we are speaking. Worse yet, some squirm into a more comfortable posture which will induce sleep and indicate that they want to be awakened when the sermon is completed. When this happens, frequently enough the priest becomes provoked or angry and berates the listeners. I frequently tell my seminarians that if and when this happens to them in their preaching: "Have one of the ushers come up to the pulpit and wake you, the preacher up!"

However, just to tell a seminarians that drabness, dullness, and lack of imagination characterize his writing and place the "kiss of death" on his sermons is hardly enough advice and inspiration for him to overcome this difficulty. Hence, I feel somewhat obligated to teach seminarians a variety of formats for the effective writing of their Sunday sermons. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to present and explain different formats for the writing of the Sunday sermon, to explain the necessity both for the speaker and the listener of variety in the format used, to show some of the advantages as well as the difficulties involved in teaching these formats, and to foster and stimulate some discussion of these matters following this paper. Therefore, little will be said about the delivery of the Sunday sermon, for this is a rich field for another paper. In passing, however, I will mention a few basic principles regarding delivery with reference to some of these formats if they are to be effective.

Everyone, especially the teacher of homiletics, is aware of the necessity of somekind of organization, principle of unity, scheme of presentation, in a word, *format,* in the writing of a good sermon. Since many of us were trained in both literature and speech along somewhat classical lines, we are all somewhat familiar with Aristotle's well-known *dispisitio partium,* the disposition of the parts of a speech, as he unfolded this in his *Rhetoric.*

The time-honored and solid: exordium, narration, proposition, division, proofs, the pathetic appeal, the refutation, and peroration ring a very familiar bell. Perhaps some of us, too, have been exposed to the plans of more recent teachers and rhetoricians such as: (1) *Borden's Method*—Ho Hum, Why bring that up? For instance, and So what? (2) *CIMA*—Communicate, illustrate, motivate, actuate. (3) *Monroe's Motivated Sequence*—Attention Step, Need Step, Satisfaction Step, Visualization Step, and Action Step. (4) *The W Plan,* proposed by me in a series of high school speech textbooks called the *Speaking Series*: Wake up, What's the big idea? Why bring that up? Weave in some illustrations, and Warn as well as wrap up. Frankly, over a period of some twelve years I have tried one or all of these methods and found them wanting for the writing of effective Sunday sermons. After much trial and error I have come upon another method which cuts across many of the previously mentioned plans, which seems to be somewhat easier and more effective to teach, which the seminarians have told me has helped them greatly in writing, especially the more imaginative aspects of writing, and which has, in my humble opinion produced some good results.

Before going into detail regarding each method or format, perhaps a few words might be in place regarding the necessity of variety in formats, a must for both the listener and the speaker. I suppose all of us have heard somewhat frequently openers such as this from the pulpit come Sunday morning: "Now in today's Gospel Christ tells us that . . . . ." or "Today's feastday gives me an opportunity to talk to you about. . . . ." or again, "Perhaps last night on 'At Random' you saw Mr. . . . . who said that. . . . " Now the difficulty with these somewhat pat and pathetic openers is that they tend to set up the pattern of organization or the framework for the entire sermon. No doubt, on occasion all of us have begun a sermon or two in this manner. But to start every sermon with this type of staid and hackneyed beginning is something else. After a few Sundays of this diet, the average listener is very apt to say to himself: "Ho Hum! Here we go again on the same merry-go-round!" Obviously, this is another facet of that "kiss of death" which I previously mentioned.

Now for the parish priest stationed as he is over a period of time in the same parish, diversity of format is an absolute necessity. Usually he is speaking to the same people, his parishioners, every Sunday in the year. He just cannot stay with one set format every Sunday, a scheme which he has found easy to handle and into which His ideas fit very snugly. Unless his format changes on occasion, I fear that his parishioners will not look

forward with eagerness and enthusiasm to his weekly sermons. The late Lew Sarett, the well-known and loved professor for years at Northwestern University's School of Speech, used to say often to his graduate students: "The listeners will come back to you with enthusiasm only if you win their attention and interest, get a worthwhile message across in an interesting manner, and keep them guessing each time as to just what will be your approach in the next talk or sermon." From my own limited experiences as a teacher and a practicioner, my former teacher and friend, Lew, was so correct!

The speaker also needs this variety in the format he uses. Many of my students have told me that these methods or plans helped them greatly to concretize and dramatize their ideas, helped them set off a few fireworks in the minds and the hearts of their listeners, and gave them a strong confidence in the worth of their own ideas as well as their ability to present these in an attractive and winning manner. Incidentally, these same students also told me that some variety in these formats have helped their delivery greatly because they were now convinced that they had a message which was well thought out and touched the everyday lives of their listeners.

Over a period of twelve years I have stumbled upon six, different formats, methods, organizational principles, which I try to teach my students in their four year course in homiletics. A few of these methods were taught to me in grade school. Hence, I have made an effort to baptize and adapt these for sermon purposes. Other methods I have elaborated myself or have heard others use the format in an effective manner. I have never found these approaches in any books, periodicals, or speech journals. No doubt, many of you experienced seminary professors have hit upon other formats and methods. We hope that you will discuss these with us after this paper. Perhaps if we pool our teaching experiences we can be of great help and service to each other as well as our important work of educating and producing better speakers. The methods which I have hit upon and which I try to teach my students are the following six: the FRAMEWORK TECHNIQUE, the REFRAIN TECHNIQUE, the PROBLEM–SOLUTION TECHNIQUE, the SYMBOL TECHNIQUE, the WITNESS TECHNIQUE, and finally, the MODERN PARABLE TECHNIQUE.

I believe that each of you has received a pack of eleven sermons. Obviously, there are more sermons than techniques or formats. Some of the sermons will illustrate a somewhat different facet of the technique, or will show how the format can be adapted to a definite occasion, or finally will

demonstrate what educators tell us is "negative practice." All these sermons were written by my present or former students. I believe that they exemplify the format in question rather well. Please don't be too severe or critical with reference to the idea content of the sermons; after all, most of the men are either very young priests or are still in their seminary training. In general, they are humble people and will be the first to admit that they still have much to learn, especially in effective writing. Because they are humble and willing to learn, I have good hopes for the future and the work they will do for Christ in the pulpit.

But before going into an analysis and explanation of each of the six formats, allow me to digress for just a few minutes. You will note that in addition to the format in these sermons, I require a statement in writing in every sermon submitted regarding the following: (a) the *thesis* of the sermon. In a simple, declarative sentence, what's this sermon all about? Any teacher of speech or homiletics knows the trying task it is to get the student to narrow and limit his topic sufficiently so that it can be handled and developed effectively in the limited time for his sermon or talk. Very often I have to point out to the student that he has enough material for an entire Lenten series in his Sunday sermon. (b) *The specific audience reaction,* namely, what do you as the speaker intend the listener to "do" about the thesis (*do* in the widest and most comprehensive sense of the word). (c) The *justification*—why are you talking about this specific topic to this audience? My contention is that this justification should not be just buried in the mind of the speaker but must be overtly stated to the listeners. Nor is it enough to state that the reason you are talking about this subject is that it is the assigned topic in the diocesean syllabus of sermons. There must be some other reason which touches the everyday lives of the average listener in the congregation. These, then, are the touchstone which I use to judge the effectiveness, at least in content and in writing, of every sermon: the listener must be able to answer the three following questions: *What* did Father talk about (thesis)? *Why* did he talk about this subject today and to me? (Justification) What am I supposed to do about all this? (specific audience reaction) I tell my students that if these three questions can be readily answered by the average listener, then you have preached well—the rest is dependent upon God's generous grace and the cooperation of the listener. For we should never forget that preaching is an external, actual grace.

Now let us turn to the individual formats and the sample sermons which were given to you. These have been arranged in a definite order or

sequence, namely, from the easier techniques to teach and to be grasped by the average theologian to the more difficult formats which perhaps only the more gifted students will catch and be able to use effectively in their writing. The first format I teach is the easiest. I call this the FRAMEWORK TECHNIQUE. In this format the writer begins his sermon with a story, illustration, or an anecdote. This should lead quickly and naturally to the overt expression of the thesis for the entire sermon. In the development of the thesis, the student must have a few references or cross-references back to the material in the opener; this is most frequently done via figures of speech. Then in the conclusion, the writer returns specifically to the material in the beginning of the sermon. I presume that this technique gets its name from a picture frame—the opener and the conclusion for the top and bottom, of the frame, the body with its references back would represent the two sides of the picture frame. In this sample sermon, one submitted as part of this past year's Junior Clergy Exam, Fr. Nemecek opens with an incident regarding the family room. This leads well and smoothly to his thesis—family happiness depends on a strong spirit of understanding. In the body of the sermon he has several references and applications of the family room idea. He comes back to this same material, the family room, well and explicitly in the conclusion of the sermon. Note, too, that the Holy Family and the feastday are an integral part of the sermon and not just something plastered on from the outside. This format is easy to teach, is readily caught by the least gifted student, and can be applied to very many different types of sermons and situations. Incidentally, before each assignment and as part of my written directions for each exercise, I give my students several sample copies exemplifying the technique in writing.

All six of these formats are taught in the first two and a half years of theology. Hence, in the remaining years in theology I can teach the seminarians to apply these formats to different types of sermons and situations. In the second sample sermon, a children's sermon, the same framework technique is very aptly applied and adapted to youngsters in about the 5th or 6th grade. By the way, although many pastors have abandoned the children's Mass and prefer that the family come to church as a unit, there are still pastors who wish to retain the time-honored custom of the Mass for the children. Hence, I feel justified in asking that at least one sermon in the four years be especially adapted and given for children. In passing I might mention some of the excellent qualities of this sermon other than the use of the framework technique. Note how Fr. Laz moves,

# CATHOLIC HOMILETIC SOCIETY

## Luncheon 1961

1. Most Rev. John J. Wright, S.T.D.
2. Most Rev. Philip Hannan, S.T.D.
3. Rev. Thomas V. Liske, S.T.D.
4. Rev. Pius Leabel, C.P.
5. Rev. John O'Donnell
6. Rev. Joseph T. Konkel
7. Rev. Joseph Connors, S.V.D.
8. Rev. Cletus McCarthy, O.F.M. Cap.
9. Very Rev. Msgr. John J. Cassels, S.T.L.
10. Rev. Sylvester McNutt, O.P.
12. Rev. Cyril F. Meyer, C.M.
13. Rev. J. H. O'Neill

11. Rev. [illegible]
18. Rev. [illegible]
19. Rev. [illegible]
20. Rev. [illegible]
21. Rev. [illegible]
22. Rev. [illegible]
23. Rev. [illegible]
24. Rev. [illegible]
25. Rev. [illegible]
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27. Rev. [illegible]
28. Rev. [illegible]

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...r, C.M.
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...Toohey, C.S.C.
...teau, C.S.V.
...ke, O.P.
...Carty, M.S.S.T.
...ahan, O.F.M.
...Brown
...Kegler, O.S.B.

30. Very Rev. George H. Mulcahy
31. Rev. Henry O'Meara, C.S.S.R.
32. Rev. Anatole O. Baillargeon, O.M.I.
33. Rev. John A. Treinen, C.S.S.R.
35. Very Rev. Theodore Cirone, O.M.F.
39. Rev. Fidelis Goodman, M.M.
40. Rev. Eugene F. Richard
45. Rev. A. J. Peterman, S.J.
47. Rev. Germain Schwab, O.F.M.
53. Rev. John Brum
56. Very Rev. Louis J. Schafhauser, S.V.D.
57. Rev. Anthony Scannell, O.F.M., Cap.
59. Rev. John J. O'Keefe, C.S.P.
60. Rev. Rian Clancy, C.P.
61. Rev. Bartholomew Adler, C.P.
62. Rev. Roland Maher, C.P.
63. Rev. Fidelis Rice, C.P.
64. Rev. John B. Hagerty
66. Rev. Thomas O'Connor, S.S.
67. Rev. Gregory Ambrose, O.P.
69. Rev. Thomas D. Rover, O.P.
70. Rev. John Williams, S.J.

especially in his fine examples, from the more known to the less known, the simplicity of the ideas and the language, the brevity of the sentence structure, and the effective use of the prop or the gimmick—the Mississippi River steamboat. I feel that it is the most unusual priest, and a fortiori, seminarian, who can speak to children effectively, hold their wandering minds and squirming attention, and at the same time get a message across to them which will touch their everyday lives. I think that Fr. Tom Laz has done this very well in the writing of this sample sermon.

Another somewhat easy format, but an effective one if used properly, is the REFRAIN TECHNIQUE. As the name indicates, a key phrase, a catchy expression, or a short sentence is repeated at strategic spots in the sermon. If this refrain happens to be the thesis for the entire sermon, then the technique is even more effective. The refrain should be introduced early in the sermon and should be well pointed up in delivery the first time it is utilized. This refrain should be exactly the same in its wording each time it is used in the sermon. Again, the refrain should not always be in the same place in the paragraph, say the last sentence in each paragraph. In delivery it will help if the refrain is delivered or interpreted in a slightly different manner each time. For example, in the sample sermon the refrain could be given: "THUS *PASSES* the GLORY OF THE WORLD" one time; or "THUS PASSES THE *GLORY* OF THE WORLD" in another spot, or finally, "THUS PASSES THE GLORY OF THE *WORLD*" when used again. The use of the refrain gives a good type of external unity to the sermon and might be used best when the writer has a difficult time weaving his material and his ideas into an integral and unified whole. I believe that Fr. Smythe's sermon exemplifies these qualities rather well. Plus the refrain let me call your attention to the excellent examples used in this sermon. They are concrete and vivid, they are made to payoff well in terms of the thesis to be developed, and, in general, they have those qualities of sympathy and empathy about which Fr. Curran wrote and spoke so well and eloquently in last year's meeting. Again, this is one of the easier formats which can be readily understood and used by all the seminarians.

Most parish priests are frequently preaching to their parishioners about current problems—moral, dogmatic, devotional, liturgical, socio-economic. However, I fear that many of us are very long on the presentation or the elaboration of the problem but somewhat short on proposed solutions for our faithful. I believe that the average, intelligent Catholic is somewhat aware of the problems current in the world, his community,

his home, his work, his life. He would seem to be looking for some suggestions which might help him solve some of these problems, or get a better insight into them and himself, or perhaps just to be content to learn to live with the problem. Yet how helpful in the solutions for some of these current problems are some of the sermons you have heard recently. Hence, I try to teach my students another format which I call the PROBLEM-SOLUTION technique. In the use of this format the seminarian is instructed to devote only one quarter of the sermon to the setting up and the presentation of the problem. He is strongly urged to dramatize the problem well and quickly. Then the remaining three quarters of the sermon is to be entirely concerned with the proposed solution or solutions, depending on the nature of the problem. In the sample sermon—a moral sermon on movies by Fr. Frank Slobig—the problem is well set up and the solutions suggested are at least workable and within the range of the average listener in a Sunday congregation. The second sample sermon on this format, one on the disease of "Want-itis," is a much better written sermon, clever in its presentation, and excellent in its use of current examples, but it violates a basic principle in the use of this format. Note that the greater part of this sermon, and I have introduced this by way of "negative example or practice," is devoted to the elaboration of the problem. The proposed solution comes only in the last two paragraphs. Hence, the writer has sold his listeners short because the solution is far too jejune and needs much more practical amplification to be effective. However, the sermon is very well and imaginatively written. This is the most common trap into which my students fall in using this format—heavy on the problem and very lightweight on the solution. Perhaps this Problem-solution format is best used in moral sermons, but it can be used effectively in the proposed solution for any type of problem which might be treated in dogmatic as well as inspirational sermons. In practice sermons, however, I find that many seminarians are most impractical in the type of problem they attack and even more naive in some of their suggested solutions. However, we hope that time and practical experience in the ministry might remedy this major defect.

The next three formats are somewhat more difficult both to teach and for the seminarians to use well. My experiences has been that the above average and the gifted student can and will use these techniques well and effectively. The first of these is what I call the *SYMBOL* TECHNIQUE. I usually start them with this technique applied to the life of a Saint because this is somewhat less difficult and taxing than other applications of

this method. They must choose an external symbol, one which sets up a picture in the imagination in contradistinction to an abstract symbol which is not well suited for this method. This symbol must be explained and amplified very early in the sermon. Secondly this symbol is then applied to a limited aspect of the Saint's life, not his entire life, but a very narrowed facet of the Saint's life, such as his basic aesthetical philosophy, what he or she is known for most clearly among the faithful, or what the church has chosen as the characteristic virtue of the Saint as is usually stated in the collect of the Mass for the particular Saint. Then the Saint as symbolized is applied to some limited phase of the faithful's every-day life. In the sample sermon of one of my present third-year theologians, Mitch, this is well exemplified. The symbol is a compass. This is explained at the very outset of the sermon, is an external symbol which is somewhat common, and does not need elaborate explanation. His symbol of the compass is then applied only to the constancy feature of the life of St. Thomas More. The examples selected from the life of the Saint all point up and focus on this one virtue to the exclusion of all others. This is a must in a short sermon. Finally this constancy in St. Thomas as symbolized by the compass is then applied to the tendency which all of us have on occasion to compromise. If this technique is handled skillfully it tends to promote a much more imaginative approach in writing. I try to get the students to use a few figures of speech in the development based on the symbol. The second sample of this symbol technique is a dogmatic sermon on a rather tough topic—no salvation outside the Church. Mr. Tom Kelly, now a deacon, but a second-year theologian when he wrote this sermon used well the symbol of the lifeboat and gives evidence in the sermon that he understands and can explain this dogma well and popularly. In a dogmatic sermon the use of this symbol technique is tough and perhaps only the better students will catch this and will use the method well in their writing. The third sermon exemplifying this symbol method is a funeral sermon. In their fourth year, I have each student write and deliver two funeral sermons. By this time they have been exposed to all six of the formats, so they are urged to use one or the other in this type of sermon. I believe that the "jewel" symbol is well applied in this sermon and situation and shows good insight and sympathy as well as good writing on the part of Gerry Moriarty, a deacon.

The WITNESS TECHNIQUE is the inquiring reporter newspaper method applied to sermon work. After the thesis of the sermon has been set up, the writer interviews and gets the reaction of a few people on this

topic. Then he wraps up their reactions and spells out what should be the answer to the question or the point at issue in the sermon. The slow, heavy-footed, unimaginative student is apt to make a shambles of this method. I recall a few years ago during that epic baseball season when the Chicago White Sox won their first pennant in I don't know how many years, one of my theologians attempted to use this witness technique. I believe that this lad was talking about the guardian angels. Whom did he interview as part of his sermon? Big Klu, the first baseman, and Little New, the second baseman, and Minnie Minoso, the left fielder. With great seriousness, but much to the consternation of myself but the great amusement of the class, my budding preacher asked each of these what they thought of their guardian angels? When I criticized the sermon orally after the rest of the class simmered down, I told him to leave the angels in the outfield as well as the devils in the dugout and ask some people who are qualified to give an intelligent answer on the subject. Now the sample sermon on this format does much better than that! Frank Vito, a deacon, preached this sermon in the Main Chapel a few weeks ago. Our deacons preach every Sunday and major feast day to the entire seminary at the Solemn High Mass. The question asked of the philosopher, the Soviet Soldier, the Skid Row has-been, and finally St. John the Baptist grew out of the Gospel for the third Sunday of Advent, "Who are you?" Plus good writing and intelligent selection of the persons to be interviewed, cautions and directions must be given for the delivery of such a sermon if it is to click. The speaker must have a little of the actor's "hambone" in him, for he must give a rather distinctive speaking characteristic to each witness and then make it very easy for the listener to catch when he is narrating and speaking via his own personality. In the sample sermon, Frank used a somewhat soft and absent-minded manner in delivering the reactions of the philosopher to the question, a somewhat pompous and haughty tone for the young Soviet soldier, a very hesitant and jerky style of speaking for the Skid Row character, a deep authority-ringing voice for John the Baptist, and his own natural speaking voice for the narrative sections of the sermon. When this technique in delivery is coupled with effective writing, as was the case in this sermon, the result is usually very good.

The other sample sermon based on the WITNESS TECHNIQUE is a refinement and slightly different use of the same format. The sermon is one requesting prayers for priests, Fr. Eviston, although speaking in his own name and via his own personality speaks in a threefold capacity—as

a fellow man, as a priest, and as another Christ. Again, in this devotional or inspiration sermon, Ed varied his delivery sufficiently to allow the listener to distinguish just what facet of the priest was addressing them and were able to tell when he was speaking in the narrative style. Obviously, this adaptation of the technique is somewhat more difficult to handle in both writing and delivery than the straight technique as was exemplified in the previous sermon.

Finally, the last and most difficult format is the MODERN PARABLE TECHNIQUE. We are all familiar with Christ's parables in the New Testament. In several of these, for example the sower parable, there is a part by part application of the "story" element in the parable. In this format, the modern parable, the writer starts with a story or an anecdote. All the elements which go into the story are later applied and made to payoff in terms of the desired reaction and the thesis to be elaborated and developed in the sermon. This will be evident if you examine carefully the sample dogmatic sermon by Mike Rochford, presently a Deacon but a second-year theologian when he wrote this sermon. The story of the blind lad who took his typewriter to answer the questions in a scholarship exam but forgot to put a ribbon into the typewriter so that all his work was in vain is verified part by part in the development of the thesis that the state of sanctifying grace is necessary to place meritorious acts. This is a difficult technique to teach and probably will be grasped only by the better students in the class. The format is especially difficult in a dogmatic sermon, but if you examine Mike's sermon carefully I think that you will agree that he did a good job in presenting and explaining this dogmatic truth via the modern parable format.

Of course, several of these formats can be combined in any given sermon. For example, the REFRAIN TECHNIQUE and the PROBLEM –SOLUTION or the FRAMEWORK TECHNIQUE AND THE SYMBOL TECHNIQUE. I have several samples of these combined methods, but I did not want to burden you with more copy or stretch this paper into any greater length.

Over the period of years I have encountered a few problems in teaching and explaining these techniques to my students. The first is that frequently enough the inexperienced student will spend all his time working out the format and will neglect the idea content of the sermon. They have to be reminded constantly that the purpose of all speaking, pulpit or non-pulpit, is the sharing and the communication of ideas. The format is not an end in itself but only a means or a vehicle for the pres-

entation of ideas. Hence, the format is no more a substitution for ideas than the window dressings in the department stores at this season of the year are meant to take the place of the actual products for sale on display. Once through practice and experience the seminarian gets the idea that these formats are means rather than ends in themselves he becomes much more proficient in handling these various techniques.

Another roadblock in teaching these formats it to help the student recognize and realize that certain ideas for a sermon just will not fit into one or other of the formats. If he attempts to adapt the ideas to the format the result is usually disastrous and the sermon is all window dressing—the artistry of aptness and suitability is just lacking in the sermon. I feel that it is part of my work as the teacher to offer some help and criticism along these lines, for if there is a poor fit and the ideas and the technique just do not mesh into a unified whole, I tell the student and offer a few suggestions. It is hoped that the more the student uses a variety of these techniques both in his practice sermons in the seminary and in his early ministry in the priesthood, the more facile he will become and the better will be his prudential judgment regarding the aptness of the technique to the ideas presented in the sermon.

So to return to some of the statements and inquiries made in the introduction of this paper—why are some sermons and speakers so dull, why does the priest preach the same type of sermon just about every Sunday, why do many priests ride "hobby-horses" up there in the pulpit—a partial answer might be that they have not been taught in their seminary training a sufficient number and variety of formats to overcome one or all of these current maladies which are saping the very life and substance out of Sunday preaching. I do not claim that teaching a variety of formats for Sunday sermons will effect anything like a miraculous cure, but at least this might be a partial remedy for one of the viruses which is sapping the effectiveness of current Sunday preaching. Obviously, in presenting and explaining these formats, I did not wish to imply that there are not other and perhaps better methods in use by seminary teachings today. I think that after twelve years of experimenting with these methods or formats I can honestly say this—the seminarian or the young priest cannot use one or other of these formats unless he prepares in an adequate fashion, especially in writing. Hence, sincere and honest preparation is just one of the many by-products of these techniques. Maybe when all is said and done, adequate preparation is the key which will unlock the entire problem of modern, Sunday preaching.

# The Pastor and the Missionaries During the Parish Mission

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Very Rev. and Rev. Fathers:

A priest from the Diocese of Buffalo told me that a few years back he was in charge of a street-preaching crusade: priests teamed up in pairs, as I understood it; and while one did the talking, the other would be down among the people, studying their reactions to the sermon.

One Sunday evening he had his co-worker up doing the preaching, while he himself stood down on the fringe of the crowd. Suddenly he had a funny feeling, as though being overwhelmed; he was conscious of two enormous presences on either side of him. He stole a glance upward on his right; a great, big broad shouldered hulk of humanity was there—well over six feet in height, extremely broad shoulders; a rough, tough-looking man, he was. And looking up on his left was an even larger "presence," and possibly even harder looking than the other fellow.

No, they were not around to make trouble for the priests—quite the contrary. They had been out for a walk, and noticed the priests and the crowd and thought the "Fathers" might be in some difficulty that demanded formidable assistance. One was a guard, the other a tackle, with the then-champion Cleveland Browns; they had played an exhibition game that afternoon against the Buffalo Bills.

So that incident had a happy ending. I do hope, however, that some of the former football players among the priests-missionaries gathered here don't "gang up" on the one giving this paper—the best I could do was act as a cheer leader at the school for boys that I attended.

The fact is that I have always had somewhat of a yen for the work of preaching missions—so much so that I have attempted to give Christian Family type missions around my own diocese. As a seminarian, I gave more

than serious thought to the idea of becoming a Redemptorist—and this was mainly because of those tremendous sons of Saint Alphonsus that I had met during parish missions—Fathers McLaughlin, McKenna, Healy and McPhail, are some names that come to mind.

It might be well here to mention some of the problems that face men on the missions: long hours in the confessional; up early in the morning for the first Masses; strenuous-type sermons; constantly "on the move," living out of a suitcase, clerical gypsies, as it were; perhaps away from the community so much as to be somewhat estranged from the regular life; attempting to fit into a new environment every few days in rectories where the spirit may be good, indifferent, or worse; I might add that even the repitition of the same sermons adds to the occupational hazards of the missionary—a weariness in well doing; perhaps a sense that he is somewhat of an outcast; he doesn't belong in the parish; nor is he set into the permanent environment of his monastery. I think that pastors ought to exercise every understanding towards missionaries—make them feel that they are wanted; that they are welcome.

And after seven happy years as a chaplain at a school run by the Christian Brothers, before becoming a pastor, I have learned to be wary of generalizations; fellow priests used to ask me: "How are you getting along with the Brothers?" I got the impression that I was being given the chance to take "pot-shots" at these dedicated men of God. But this I could not do. I tried to understand the position of the Brothers, and they "went overboard" in their attitude of appreciation for this effort of empathy. And in the very rare instances of misunderstanding, I either consulted the superior privately, or talked the matter over with a particular Brother—it was never a case of condemning the Community.

And so it would be even more absurd to generalize about the varia of missionaries who give parochial missions. However, I have talked to a number of parish priests about this question; I have also been on the parochial scene during the time of missions; and especially during the meetings of our Homiletic Society when a variety of our missionaries have expressed themselves—their point of view—have I gathered certain impressions. If a general outlook is to be gathered then you must help as well.

Here are some of the reactions from pastors to missionaries: One parish priest was concerned with the question of fees—he believes that one should have a better idea as to how much is expected. It is realized that areas, as well as parishes, vary considerably, and that some places can do better

than others. And it does not seem right to complain to a pastor about an insufficient offering, if it has not been predetermined. On this point, another pastor told me about offering six hundred dollars—$150.00 dollars a week per man—at the end of the mission and being told point blank that this was not enough. The question is whether, when the amount is left "up in the air" as it were, that missionaries should complain when the offering falls below their expectations.

Another pastor, a former rector of a cathedral, told me that while rector he had engaged a lenten preacher to whom he gave expense money during his stay, a check for a thousand dollars for the community; and seventy five dollars for a tip to the preacher. The man let it be known that he was most dissatisfied with the tip.

In another case, the first concern of a missionary when arriving in the parish, was to ask the curate to locate a handy bookie. Another preacher told a pastor that he could not decide whether to get his mother a colored television set, or a deep freeze for her Christmas present.

The fact is that if one has what might be termed the "protection" of the vow of poverty, then it would seem as though he should live up to it. Secular priests who receive a salary are not so "protected"; they are expected to contribute to a varia of causes; and I think that they are rather surprised to find some religious so money-conscious. Should I add that I am tremendously edified by the way that a number of other religious that I know, including some of our missionaries, who are not only possessed of holy indifference, but are wholly indifferent when it comes to money.

The question of drinking arose—one pastor stressing this factor. He is certainly not opposed to giving the missionaries a drink; but he believes that it ought to be done after the day's work is completely finished; he does not relish the idea of a priest hearing confessions, or being around altar boys, and giving evidence of drinking. The priest in question is most hospitable, and there is always "nightcap" enjoyment on hand in his home for those who wish it. The idea "let your moderation be known to all men" fits in here—for all of us.

One pastor had the impression that some of the missionaries that he had met were a bit on the cynical side—and that they did not practice what they preached. Having stayed at this pastor's rectory, I know that he and his four assistants are men of prayer; there is evidence that they meditate, visit the Blessed Sacrament and keep spiritual reading books "on the run." I am afraid that some of us have our missionaries up on a pedestal; and since some of them give retreats to priests we expect them

to lead the way for priest and people by example. This is not to begrudge these missionaries a few moments of relaxation watching Television; although another pastor mentioned the fact that at his last mission the boys seemed to have nothing else to do in between their mission duties.

But on a more positive note, I talked to a pastor who was most pleased with his recent mission. He described the missionaries as charming and cooperative; their sermons were full of hope and inspiration; they visited the sick with the priests of the parish; dropped around to the school; in a word, made an "all-out" effort to invigorate the spiritual life of the parish. This pastor has only words of praise and gratitude for his missionaries.

Most parish priests realize, I think, that they must depend on the missionaries, as strangers, to treat with sufficient realism the sixth and ninth commandments; yet some pastors have run across missionaries who seemed very crude in handling these subjects. Two pastors of rural parishes told me of a missionary who preached for them who, before a mixed congregation of men, women and little children defined intercourse—not the spiritual kind we read about in the lives of the saints. Both pastors were shocked; and one of them questioned the missionary on the advisibility of this. He defended his stand: "What better place to explain this than before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament." I have reason to believe that in such a case one might get the impression that such a procedure is community policy, whereas quite the contrary is true. In any event, missionaries must be well balanced in treating of numbers 6 and 9 and not give the impression that they constitute the main faults of all humans; it is simply a question of keeping the subject in its proper place.

One pastor, a member of a missionary community, has just completed a mission; since I believe his ideas give us food for future planning, both on the part of pastor and missionaries, then I save the "good wine till the last." First of all he prepared for the mission; he was not so unreasonable as to expect the missionaries to simply come in on a Sunday morning and "talk it up," and then blame them if the people did not come. So the members of his various societies called, not only on Catholics, but on everyone in the area. This method reminds one of the method of a financial campaign, in which your canvassers, having first pledged themselves, then go forth in an apostolic spirit to get others "on the bandwagon."

This pastor picked the missionaries from his community; he booked them well in advance. Since he knew full well their planned schedule of

sermons and that there could be a variation, then he told them which ones he wanted where there was an option; for instance, they preached on death and sin, but they did not give a direct sermon on Hell; now don't interpret this as meaning that I am opposed to sermons on Hell, but this was his policy; and since he was not a secular, and was "in the know" as it were, why there was no question of his being told: "Father, this is the sermon that we give on that evening." He told me that he would actually prefer to have the missionaries for an entire month, and that he expects them to have some comprehension of the various societies in the parish; he expects them to have an influence in promoting the varia of organizations; and also to this end in his hall, he had an excellent display, with members present, of every society in the parish. He felt that the mission itself provided some inspirational talks, but that essential basic apostolic conversion was taking place before the mission actually got under way. He believes that as a result of this careful planning, seventy five percent of the parish took part in the actual mission services.

I realize that I have given a few scattered incidents that might help pastors and missionaries, working together, to draw some basic conclusions that will be most helpful in the apostolate. And I believe that our Homiletic Society can well prove to be a clearing ground in such a question as The Pastor and the Missionaries During the Parish Mission."

# Thinking About Retreats

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Practically anyone who has gone to school has some ideas or theories on education. Some feel things are in sorry shape; some find the state of education to be fair in a mediocre kind of way; others optimistically think modern schools are wonderful and getting better every day. Changing the subject from school to retreats we run into the same wide spectrum of opinion. Bring a group of priests together and throw out the topic. You'll get all sorts of reactions. Some in the group just had a wonderful retreat master, and they praise him. You might hear some say they never really made a retreat until they made one alone. Others tell you they make a trip to Gethsemane in Kentucky after their annual retreat to make a decent one; maybe they blame the situation on the indifference of the group making the regular annual retreat; maybe they blame the retreat master. Some feel retreats are generally worthwhile and that retreat masters do a difficult job as well as one might expect it to be done.

There are several ways of handling mixed reactions like these. One is to oppose conflicting statements to each other and make the criticism or discussion cancel itself out. Take the school talk for example. It's obvious that education can't be superb, run of the mill, and utterly stupid all at the same time. Therefore, why take the talk seriously? However, this approach is no more balanced than what it criticizes because it fails to make any basic distinctions. It is quite possible for some teaching or teachers to be brilliant, for most of it to be passable without being especially remarkable, and for some education to be an abomination. In fact, this is the sort of thing we might expect as the human way—a general average that does the job passably, a few persons or situations that are excellent, and at the other end of the scale, the highly unsatisfactory.

Again, does this mean that there's no point in talk about school, since schools are after all pretty much what you'd expect them to be? Well, school is such a vital factor in modern life that we find it can't be ignored. We believe that it is important, too important to be ignored. I think that

this is the attitude most priests have about retreats. If they are happy about a good retreat master, if they criticize or discuss, they do it because it means something to them, because it is important.

Now this conviction we have about the value and importance of retreats is enough to start off an animated discussion almost any time. If we want to get further than just telling each other or the retreat master how much we enjoyed the retreat or how ardently we wished we were somewhere else during the retreat, if we want to do more than agree or mutter in futility, we have to determine some standards and decide on some approach to discussing retreats. Certainly, to make any sense we have to be clear at least on what a retreat is and what it's supposed to do.

There are several factors to be considered in any retreat. There is, of course, the supernatural reality of grace. This grace operates in a particular time and place, in what we might call the situation of the retreat. Some retreats are practically doomed from the start because of the poor situation. It has happened, even among priests, that a retreat was a failure on this point; it wasn't a retreat but a reunion over beer, cards, and talk interrupted by conferences. Then we have the retreatants, the particular group making the spiritual exercises. And finally the retreat master.

These elements—grace, the situation, the retreatants, and the retreat master—can be combined and considered in a number of ways. Since the Catholic Homiletic Society is especially interested in the preacher, I propose to view a retreat from the standpoint of a retreat master preparing to conduct a retreat. To simplify matters let's assume the element of grace and say no more of it. Consider the time and place ideal for a retreat. The particular retreatants we'll have in mind is a group of priests, as they are generally supposed to be the most critical audience. So with the stage setting that of a group of priests at a quiet spot to make a retreat we introduce the retreat master as the person who is supposed to help the retreatants to achieve the purpose of a retreat. Which brings us up to the basic question, "What is a retreat?"

## AIM OF A RETREAT

The purpose of a retreat is to consider one's relationship with God. Put simply, we make a retreat to get nearer to God. A retreat may well be the occasion for conversion but the idea of a retreat is not simply to regain the state of grace, should it be lost, but to orient oneself to living a full christian life, or, in more usual terminology, to seek perfection. Father McVann defines a retreat this way: "The term 'spiritual exercises' covers a

wide field of preaching which may be defined as an arrangement of meditations and other exercises of piety under the direction of a spiritual guide for the purpose of advancing souls on the path of perfection." (1)

The retreat master, therefore, is there to help the retreatants come closer to God. To do this effectively he must assess himself, his message (the content of the retreat), and his audience. Taking each of these three points—the man directing the retreat, the message of the retreat, and the listeners—let's try to answer questions on their fundamental nature.

## THE RETREAT MASTER

How should a retreat master look at himself when he stands before other priests during a retreat? Answer: in the same way as when he stands before any other retreatants. He is the guide in the exercises; the very reason he is there is to help the group along, to furnish guidance or direction. The retreat master is a very important factor in a retreat in spite of the self-deprecatory words and gestures we often hear about his 'not being in the least bit important, as the retreatants really make the retreat, and so forth.' A teacher might as logically tell his class that he and his presentation don't matter in the least because in the final analysis the student only learns if he wants to learn and what he wants to learn. Now this is nonsense. Of course, a teacher can't learn or study for the student, but he certainly can be a help or a hindrance to him.

The retreat master is by the very nature of a retreat a spiritual director, if not in the strict sense as "the one to whom a person manifests his state of soul and to whom he offers himself to be habitually directed (that is, instructed and urged on) in the way of perfection," (2) then at least in a general sense, for he is guiding the people in the retreat to greater perfection. St. Francis DeSales (3) obligingly lists the qualities of a spiritual director (and therefore of a retreat master); he says he must be full of charity, knowledge, and prudence.

To avoid falling into a pit of quicksand I'd like to interject a little note here. Last summer I gave a retreat to a community of Franciscan Sisters who conduct a home for the sick and aged on their property. There was an old priest, an arthritic, partially deaf and almost blind, who had been at the home for over fifteen years. I used to stop by his room after the

(1) McVann, James; *The Cannon Law On Sermon Preaching;* New York: The Paulist Press, 1940, p. 154.
(2) La Reguera, Praxis Theol. Myst.; quoted in De Guibert, J.; *The Theology of the Spiritual Life;* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953, p. 155.
(3) *Introduction To The Devout Life.* Part I; Chapter IV.

morning conference and visit with him. One morning, practically out of the blue, (maybe he was thinking of my conferences!) he said, "Father, isn't there an awful lot of gassing about the spiritual life, especially about the virtues?" I think we'd all add an "Amen" to that. When we read or hear about the qualities a priest should have—all that virtue and learning or, to bring it in line with the point here, when we hear about how full of charity, knowledge, and prudence he must be, it sounds as if it would take a miracle to qualify. But as Father Charles Doyle points out, any priest is required to have charity, knowledge, and prudence to qualify for hearing confessions, and we usually don't go into a panic over that. So with due respect to the masters of the spiritual life let's talk about these virtues as high ideals, certainly, but ideals which are attainable in some worthwhile degree by the average priest.

By charity is meant a sincere interest in the spiritual welfare of others. You want to help the retreatant in whatever degree you can. One of our older Fathers gave this notion of charity, or holiness if you prefer, a down-to-earth definition as applied to a preacher. He said it simply means being sincere in wanting to love God, that we honestly believe what we say, and are at least trying to live accordingly. One need not be perfect to be serious about perfection, and to be really serious about it you have to be realistic. It does little good to "gas" about all the angelic virtues a man should have. After all, Fathers, do we stop saying mass because we are not really worthy to do so, for 'even the very angels are unworthy. . . etc., etc.'?

Besides having charity the retreat master must be full of knowledge. Speech books usually have a page or two on introductions and phrases that are just too exhausted to ever be useful, as, e.g., "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking. . . . " Preaching manuals could also draw up lists. Under retreat openers proscribed we would find: "Now, Fathers, I'm not here to give you any high-powered theology; I'm not a theologian; I don't know any theology, as a matter of fact all of you are probably smarter than I am."

Now, this can be understood in a couple of ways. When a Priest says he's not a theologian he usually means he's not an expert in theology like the men who write in learned journals or the Doctors of Theology who teach in seminaries or are consultors to pontifical commissions. Unfortunately, it also seems to mean sometimes that the man really does not know any theology and, worse, does not care to know any because it really isn't important for anyone but a few odd characters who teach in seminaries or

enjoy speculation and discussion on abstract and impractical aspects of dogma. Somehow dogma and piety are supposed to be completely unrelated; the "theologian" is given dogma as his province; the "preacher," piety.

Several years ago while lecturing at the Preachers' Institute at Catholic University, Father Benard commented on this attitude in this way. He said that a priest who is not a theologian is nothing because theology, the science of God, is his field. Therefore, if it's really true, it's a terribly damaging admission for a priest to say he knows no theology and then to go ahead and preach and try to guide his people. That would be just as immoral as for a doctor to tell the patient he doesn't know any medicine but he's willing to suggest some drug for the patient to experiment with, or for a lawyer to tell his client he doesn't know any law but, just for the fun of it, why doesn't he try this. . . ., and then send the man a bill for legal advice.

A priest, a retreat master, need not be a world famous expert any more than every doctor need be a renowned specialist in order to practice, but he must be competent. He must have a fair knowledge of spiritual theology; he must have a good grip on the basic principles of the spiritual life. And all retreat masters do; at least nearly all of them do—I can remember one sad retreat when the retreat master declared in the first conference that he didn't know any theology, and then spent the rest of the week proving that he wasn't kidding at all.

What is reprehensible in a retreat master, or any other priest for that matter, is not knowledge but any affectation or display of knowledge for its own sake. The key here is that the retreat master should be true to himself. If he is ordinarily a blunt, outspoken sort of man he ought to be the same in retreat; if he is a seminary professor he shouldn't try to talk like an old pastor wise in the ways of parish situations. If he is a teacher of history or English he needn't hesitate about using his background in history or even poetry to illustrate his points. A scripture scholar ought not to hesitate to use his knowledge of the scripture to make the bible come alive for the retreatants. Each man must be himself and present the matter in his own style.

So much for charity and knowledge, now what of the third quality St. Francis DeSales lists as necessary for a director, namely, prudence? What can you prudently say about prudence? Well, prudence is prudence. We'll let it go at that.

## THE CONTENT OR MESSAGE OF A RETREAT

It's time to move from the retreat master to the retreat itself—its structure and content. The structure of a retreat is always the same because it always aims at bringing the retreatants closer to God. Every retreat has the same objective and relies on the same means. It is the retreat master's job to present or suggest the motivation which will urge the retreatants to seriously apply the means to achieve the end of every retreat.

The objective of course is union with God through Christ. Christ is the source of holiness. Christ is the pattern of holiness. Christ is the focal point, and everything is tested by the standard of Christ. The closer a thing is to Christ, the closer it brings us to Christ, the more important it is. Therefore the Eucharist is central. Everything removed from the Eucharist, e.g., special devotions and pious practices, ought to be valued and used to the degree and only in so far as it helps us approach the center, Christ.

The movements of our day—the scripture studies, the catechetical and liturgical revival—converge here. The stress is on the king and center of all hearts, Christ in whom, says St. Paul, all things are taken up. It is worth noting that the classic retreat form, the Exercises of St. Ignatius, concentrate and center on Christ. Whatever method is used in retreat, whatever theme is used to unify it, whether it is the pastoral epistles, the doctrine of the mystical body, devotion to the Sacred Heart, the sacraments, the mysteries of the rosary, the stations of the cross, devotion to our Lady, all these things are to be presented so as to point to Christ. All things in Christ.

The means to growth in Christ, growth in holiness, are, first of all, the general means, that is, those necessary for all—The mass and the sacraments, prayer mortification, scripture, spiritual reading, and the recognition of charity as the prime law of the spiritual life. Then there are considerations or special means suited to different groups and vocations, to priests, or religious, or married people, to the unmarried, to high school boys and girls, for example: the breviary for priests, or a consideration of the nature and problems in community life for religious.

To say that every retreat is the same in structure, that it always has the same objective and means, is not the same as saying, however, that every retreat is, can, or should be a carbon copy of every other. Every retreat master or preacher knows that he is supposed to proclaim something called the eternal truths. In practice this sometimes seems to mean that

we are to be eternally subjected to exactly the same words and phrases: "Dear Fathers, it's all on the first page of the catechism." No doubt, but we usually require a lot more than a simple statement in order to understand a simple statement. Einstein packed a revolution into the formula $E = mc.^2$ We take subjects like English, mathematics, and history, year after year in school, from grade school through high school into college and even, perhaps, into graduate work. Now English classes on the college or graduate level are not simple repetitions of lessons in first or second grade. Our faith is at least as rich as English as a subject; as a matter of fact, the eternal truths are religious mysteries and therefore inexhaustible. The mass should mean more to a priest than it does to high school students, and the retreat master should not give exactly the same talk to a group of priests and a group of high school boys.

This raises the question of the approach or presentation of the retreat master in his preaching. The key to this is found in the objective of the retreat. The retreat master's job is to furnish motivation to the retreatants for reaching the objective, Christ, by applying the means of the spiritual life. This means he ought not to give just a series of devotional sermons, or see the topics as a kind of concert during which the retreatants sit in pleasant but passive enjoyment. He must work at making the retreatants work. This is the idea of meditation in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius. In meditation one does not listen to a talk as to a lecture or travelogue; the idea is to pick up cues for some hard thinking which should end in reflective prayer.

## THE AUDIENCE OR RETREATANTS

We've been going quickly through some standards for the retreat master—his charity, knowledge, and prudence. We've touched on the basic structure and content of a retreat. Finally we arrive at the third element to be considered, that is, the audience or the retreatants. Since we are considering the retreatants in this case to be priests, the question is how should the retreat master approach them? What do they expect of him?

First of all, most priest have few illusions about their spiritual life. They know they have room for improvements, and most priests are interested in trying to make the improvements, in trying to really be more like Christ. This fact is the retreat master's guide. He ought not, therefore, to concentrate on winning one or the other person in serious need and turn the retreat into a kind of parish mission designed to convert someone

who may or may not be in the audience. If the conferences give the group matter for thought, obviously it will give any member of the group some help or inspiration.

Most priests, I believe, want the retreat master to speak as a priest from his own thoughts and experiences. There is no need to spend much time on the effusions of the Saints on the glories of the mass or breviary; what we want to hear is something about living the mass in our day and in our work. No need to spend a disproportionate time singing the praises of chastity as the purity of the angels; we are not angels; we are interested in the meaning of chastity, in the sometime pain of chastity, in the highs and lows . . . we are, in short, concerned with chastity as a challenge to very human men, not as applied to angels who are after all sexless beings with never a temptation or problem on the matter.

Priests are said to be very critical as a audience. If the retreat master approaches them this way he will find them the easiest of audiences. Priests are not looking for the spectacular in any retreat. It doesn't take anyone very long after ordination to become disillusioned with that sort of thing. What a priest on retreat wants and looks for is some help and encouragement in loving Christ more in the day-to-day activities that leave little room for the fading dreams of seminary days.

For what they are worth, Fathers, these are some thoughts on retreats, especially retreats for priests.

# Are We Teaching Skill--Fully?

## A Partial Answer to Large Speech Classes

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"SKILL" :: CONTENT...

In case you have been wondering whether the space between "skill" and "fully" in the title of this talk is a mistake, let me assure you from the outset that it is not. I would not be so presumptuous as to question veteran homiletics professors, "Are we teaching skillfully?" But I would like to discuss with you tonight, "Are we teaching skill—fully?" To put it more plainly, are we teaching speaking skills the way such skills can best be taught? Are we approaching our teaching of homiletics and speech in a way that gives us a near-maximum return in speaking skills acquired? It was my personal conviction, after nine years of the usual seminary speech courses—and actually not many more speech presentations than that—that this usual approach is not conducive to learning speaking skills. And so I feel that we can profit by asking ourselves tonight, "Are we teaching skill—fully?" The pause is very important there for a proper understanding of the question.

And for a proper understanding of what I am about to say I think an analogy will be helpful. Let us suppose for a few minutes that, instead of homiletics and speech professors, we are typing teachers. I'm sure that there have been those days when you secretly wished this were true. Supposing you, as a typing teacher, are sent to some school to teach the skill of typing. Inquiring about the facilities available, you find out that there is only one typewriter available for your course. Wouldn't you be a bit shocked? Would you go on week after week having one person type while thirty others just watch? Would you be satisfied if each student got to the typewriter once every three or four weeks? Wouldn't you be in the rector's office the second day, telling him that it is impossible to teach typing skill under such limitations, that something would have to be done so that you would have more typewriters for your class? Pawn his desk . . . let you go begging . . . anything; but more typewriters must be obtained.



- get another instructor . . . not too many students —

I'm sure you see the parallel between a typing class with one typewriter and teaching a class in public speaking or reading in which each student gets to the "typewriter," the lectern, once every six weeks. Yet, we do not seem to get excited about the latter situation. *Shouldn't we?* My experience has been that the results in both cases are about the same. A typing student in such a situation would not learn nearly as many typing skills nor master them as well as he would if he were at a typewriter every class—even though much of the time the instructor would not be watching him. Likewise, is a student of public speaking who is performing only occasionally going to learn as many good speaking and reading skills as he would if he were "at his typewriter" for at least some part of every class—even though, again, the instructor may not be observing him all the time?

But you may say, "Of course not; but the student should be sufficiently motivated so that he'll be practicing every week outside of class, whether or not he is speaking in class that week." I must confess that I've never been able to produce that kind of dynamic motivation. Besides, there is one other important consideration. The student practicing outside of class is very likely talking to himself, or, at most, to one other person. Isn't this much like practicing typing without any paper in the machine? The student can practice some reading or speaking skills; but the "paper," the audience on which he can observe the imprints of his skills (or lack of the same) is missing. So I do not believe that any amount of practice *outside* of class can substitute for *frequent* (every class) presentations *in* class.

As a result of these convictions, during the past five years I have been "searching for typewriters," as it were; I've been looking for ways of giving each of my students an opportunity to make a presentation every class. This paper explains the two basic ways one can go about "finding typewriters," and thus providing more speaking opportunities for students of homiletics and public speaking.

Before going on, perhaps I should tell you that I am working with third and fourth year college seminarians. Their speech training in third year is devoted to the developing of the *vocal* aspects of speaking, through the medium of oral interpretation. During their fourth year the emphasis is on the *physical* aspects of speaking, through the medium of various types of original speeches. With these objectives in mind, let us now turn to the methods which are used to attain these objectives.

As I have already said, there are two basic ways one can go about "finding typewriters," and thus provide more speaking opportunities for students of homiletics and public speaking. The first of these methods is

the rather common one of dividing large classes; but I do not stop there. These resulting *groups* are further sub-divided into *sections*. The second method I have used is closed circuit radio. There are at least three different ways of using this second method: 1) The three sections meeting at the same time may all be monitored and corrected from a central control room. 2) Any two sections may be monitored only from the third room. 3) Any two sections may be monitored from the third room and corrections may be made by using a buzzer and a simple code. Any of these methods requires a means of evaluating the students' presentations different from the usual teacher evaluation, since some of the presentations will not be heard by the instructor. Lastly, there is certain equipment required for a closed circuit radio setup. These, then, are the points that will be discussed in this paper: class divisions and subdivisions, use of closed circuit radio, the evaluation of student presentations, and the equipment required for a closed circuit radio setup. Each will be dealt with in this order.

Now to the first question, "How do we give each student an opportunity to make an oral presentation every class period?" In order to do this, obviously, large classes must be divided into smaller groups. It has been my experience that groups of twenty-one or twenty-four work out satisfactorily. The reason for these specific numbers will be seen in a moment. Such grouping of the students was originally attempted according to abilities and needs. But this is no longer done for two reasons: First, this only adds to an already difficult task, that of working these groups into an already crowded class schedule; it is sometimes difficult to find one period in the week when any twenty-one students are free to have a speech class, much less twenty-one or twenty-four with similar needs or abilities. Secondly, under the system of student criticism that is used—which will be explained later in this paper—it seems more advantageous to group students of varying abilities and needs, in order that the students in greater need have the example and help of those more capable. For these reasons grouping is now done, for the most part, according to the class schedule of the student. However, there is an attempt made to spread out the students with several years of public speaking training throughout the several groups.

In addition to the groups of twenty-one or twenty-four (or larger if necessary) there is one smaller group made up of those students most in need of special help and additional practice. The size of this group depends upon the number of students remaining after the larger groups

have been made. Naturally, many "border-line" students are in or out of this group simply through numerical chance. I mention this fact because it seems helpful to point out such a fact to the students of this special group as a kind of antidote for the "stigma" they seem to almost seize upon when placed in what they call—no matter what *you* call it—a "remedial group."

At St. Mary's Seminary we began this year with four groups of twenty-four students in the senior year and one special group of nineteen; and in the junior year five groups of twenty-seven (which is too many) and one group of sixteen (which is a much more manageable number). This makes a total of two hundred and sixty-six students who were expecting to learn speaking skills, meeting once a week under one instructor. How is this being accomplished?

The means being used to attain this perhaps seemingly unattainable goal are the result of five years of experimentation. Their origin really goes back even farther than that. I came into the field of teaching with a determination that my students must speak much more frequently than the usual once every month or two of many speech courses. I was not sure at that time how this was to be accomplished. I thought my post-graduate training at the University of Michigan might have given me the answer. If any of you studied there under Professor Densmore, you know that he is a great advocate of the get-them-up-as-often-as-possible system He accomplished this by having us introduce each other every time we spoke. In general, one week you would introduce a speaker; the next week you would be introduced and give a speech. Introductions would be brief, about two minutes, as I recall; and the speeches varied in length from about three minutes to seven or eight minutes. So you see that for the shorter speeches twenty students would get "up" in one class period, ten introducing and ten speaking. As the speeches became longer you were "up" less frequently, with only about ten or twelve students getting "up" in one class. This meant, therefore, that there were some classes in which you just "sat it out."

For want of something better, I tried this system for one year with groups of twenty-four, making it a point to get every student "up" every week. I feel that the results were satisfactory, even though the speeches had to be very short, and the introductions even shorter. But seminarians introducing each other presented problems—as you can imagine—that never arose at the University of Michigan. I decided that this system would not teach speaking skills—fully.

So the following year I further subdivided each group into three equal sections. A student leader was in charge of each of these sections, senior volunteers acting as section leaders for the junior sections, when class schedule left them free to do so. Otherwise, juniors acted as leaders of their own sections. Let's see what we have now.

Under the former setup we had five groups of seniors and six groups of juniors, didn't we? That meant that the speech professor had eleven speech classes per week, although each student had class just once a week. But now we have thirty-three sections; would this mean thirty-three classes per week for the instructor? Needless to say, I looked for another possibility.

The answer seemed to be to have three sections (that is, one whole group) meet in three different rooms at the same time under their student leaders. This would mean no more class hours than before for the professor. So this arrangement was set up, not without some difficulty in finding three classrooms available at eleven different periods during a week. But by gently pushing a few other classes around—for once speech was the pusher instead of the pushed—this was accomplished. And we began the experiment . . . not sure what would happen. What would be accomplished?

Under this arrangement, I would spend about fifteen minutes in each classroom, changing my plan of appearance each week, for obvious reasons. Again the results were very encouraging; but could there be a better arrangement?

While I was wearing myself out running from room to room and up and down stairs, a radio control room, with loud-speakers in the three rooms I was using for speech classes, was collecting dust for the most part. One day, during a speech class, I went to this control room and made the necessary connections to listen to one of the classes, using the loud-speaker in the room as a microphone. At one point I saw a need to make a correction so I changed some connections and corrected the speaker; then I changed back to the original setup. In the delay of changing over, of course, I missed part of the repetition—perhaps just the part I should have heard. Anyway, from this experiment came the idea that if I had two amplifiers, one for speaking and one for listening, then I could listen and make corrections while still listening. With a record cutter, several tape recorders (one a stereo), and a discarded amplifier at my disposal, it was not difficult to work this out. The final results may best be shown by this sketch. Of course, it meant making one more run of wire to each of the

rooms for a microphone lead; but this was accomplished in due time. (This "due time" includes one Christmas vacation during which three days were spent cutting through a twenty-eight inch brick wall!) One room, being a considerable distance from the control room, presented special problems. A microphone lead could not be that long. In fact, any kind of lead to this room presented problems. Luckily, one of my students at this time happened to be a trained radio technician. He figured that we could put an amplifier in this room and take the present double wire and use one wire for sending the class presentation, already amplified, to the control room, and use the other wire for sending the corrections to the classroom. Now all you electricians, who are raising your eyebrows, know that one wire cannot form a circuit. But this problem was solved by using the pipes of the heating system for the common lead for both of these circuits. Believe it or not, it worked and is still being used.

Now we had two-way communication, via closed circuit radio, to the three classrooms. How was this used? There were several possibilities which were tried.

The first of these was the simplest. Sometime during the class, instead of going to one of the classrooms, I would go to the control room and monitor and make corrections from there. This method (after the inevitable getting-used-to-it period) worked out quite well, especially with the juniors, who were doing interpretative reading. Obviously, it left much to be desired with the seniors, who were giving speeches and concentrating on the physical aspects of speaking. This, therefore, did not seem to be the method that would teach such skills—fully. But more thinking and experimenting finally offered a partial solution to the problem of observing one section, while monitoring the other two.

If I had another line running to the back of the classrooms, then I could observe the presentations in one room and still listen to the other two rooms part of the time. But now a student was needed in the control room to switch me to the two rooms that I was not in. Volunteers were no problem; in fact, I had two for every period. This control room operator makes sure that the microphones are off while adjustment is being made, and on while speaking. He also keeps switching me from room to room every three or four minutes. I listen to these other rooms while the speakers are changing in the room I'm in, or when someone is doing quite well, or when I feel that I've interrupted someone as often as will accomplish anything.

Using this arrangement, I would make a few notes of those I heard

from the other rooms; and then when I went to these other rooms I would call attention to the things I had noted from the first room. This I felt was quite satisfactory; certainly not as good as being right in the room; but much better than not being in touch with it at all. But . . . and I kept on figuring. . . .

Supposing I had a buzzer hooked up so that I could very quietly push a button from the back of one room and it would buzz in another room and tell the reader or speaker, "Slooooooow doooooooown," buzzzzzzz, buzzzzzzz? By using a triple conductor wire for these runs to the back of the rooms, one wire could be used just as the water pipes are being used, as a common for both circuits, the listening circuit and the buzzer circuit. This was done. It works. The first time it was used a couple of students commented on how well they liked it. "It is so quick; and you know immediately what to correct."

We began with just three simple signals, for the three most common problems—which I'm sure all of you have found. One long buzz means a mistake in pronounciation. Two long buzzes mean, "Slooooooooow doooooooown." Two short buzzes mean poor communication, indirectness, no inflection—call it what you will; we call it "C.Q.," conversational quality. These three signals were simply explained in a couple of minutes, demonstrated with a couple of speakers, and put to use. They were taken in stride from the first day. With this arrangement, I'm "present" in all *three* classrooms for correcting mistakes in the vocal skills of reading and speaking; and I'm present in *one* room for assisting with the physical skills as well. And with this arrangement every student, all two hundred and sixty-six, can be "up" every class.

Perhaps you are wondering how long these presentations are able to be. The length varies from a minimum of three minutes to a maximum of seven or eight minutes. In order to work in the longer presentations during the second semester, there are two types of classes, "long classes" and "short classes." (I'm sure that if one of my students were telling you of this program he would use "long classes" and "longer classes.") For the "long classes" each of the three sections of a group meets in a separate room from the beginning of the class period, under the student leader. The entire period is spent in making speeches or doing interpretative readings. This would give each student in a section of eight six minutes total time, about five and a half minutes of actual speaking or reading time.

The following week there are "short classes." For these the three sections meet for a part of the period in one room with the instructor at the

beginning of the period. This is the type of class, by the way, that is used the whole first semester. This first part of the class may be used for such things as (1) a test on speech theory, (2) a lecture on speech theory, (3) a recording played and discussed, and/or (4) a group practice session of speech exercises.

The second part of the "short class"—and this is why it is called short—is but a shortened form of the "long classes," with the three sections going to three different rooms for speeches and interpretative readings.

By this time I'm sure some of you are thinking, "O.K., you get them up every class this way, but how do they know what they should be working on and correcting?" First of all, let me say that with this arrangement I believe I see and/or hear each student more often than you would with the regular setup. But to accomplish this it cannot be a hit or miss arrangement. Each student leader keeps a card on which he records the students I see or hear each week. The following week, if I'm not in the room, he calls first on those students I've seen and heard most recently, saving the ones I haven't heard for some time for when I come to the classroom later in the period. As soon as I come into the room the next speaker or reader will be the one whom I haven't heard for the longest time. In this way I see each student about an equal number of times, and probably more frequently than I would under the traditional setup of speaking every several weeks.

In addition to the evaluation the student gets from me, two or three times each quarter, he gets a written criticism from each of the students in his section each week. (No class time is taken for vocal criticism, except brief remarks while speakers are changing.) These written criticisms are made on three by five index cards, which are given to each student in an exchange that takes place after the class period has ended. The students just gather in a circle, and this exchange takes but a couple of minutes.

Of course these student criticisms leave much to be desired, especially early in the course. The students are warned in advance that one student is going to tell him that he is too fast and another student is going to tell him that he is too slow. But it is the overall picture and the accumulation of these criticisms that give them their value. If five of the seven critics each week tell a student he is reading too rapidly, eventually he is convinced—and perhaps sooner than if the instructor alone is telling him. Another way that these cards are used to best advantage is to compile their comments on one compilation sheet. On this sheet the student tabulates how many "too fast's" he has received, how many "gestures too low," how many

"no communication," "poor eye contact," "fingers spread too much," etc. After five or six presentations, which would be about thirty or forty criticism cards, it becomes clearly evident which points the reader or speaker must concentrate on. He can forget about the two "too slow's" if he has thirty-two "too fast's."

One other evaluation is available, perhaps the least convincing to the reader or speaker, however. Each section leader has a notebook in which he writes a criticism (rather than on a card) of each speaker or reader each week. These are all on one sheet, which later in the year can be torn out and given to the speaker. Until then, they are available for the instructor to look over and see how this student has been doing in the past.

Recordings are also used to help the student evaluate his presentations. Each student in each section is recorded once every quarter, during a regular class period. Since all presentations are before a microphone, recording a class simply means having the recorder running in the control room, the recorder through which the class is being amplified anyway for the instructor's monitoring. These recordings are played back as soon as possible, usually within an hour or two of the class. Ideally, the instructor would listen to these playbacks with the student, pointing out things that need more work and things that are well done. But I find that this is impossible. So, as a second best, I have a comment sheet by the recorder and each student puts his comments on this sheet. He is especially asked to note whether or not he hears the things for which he has been criticized. These sheets are kept and referred to during the class periods to help the student with what he has noted in the playbacks, or to help him to hear what he has been unable to hear in the playback. Once a quarter seems about the right frequency for these recordings. It was tried twice a quarter; but attendance at the playbacks was not very good, especially of the seniors.

Now, if any of you are thinking of the possibility of setting up a system like this, or a modification of it, in your own seminary, I'm sure you are interested in the things that would be needed and their cost. The needs, of course, will vary according to the completeness of your setup.

The minimum requirements would be three speakers and microphones, one for each classroom; two headsets, one for the instructor and one for the operator; two amplifiers; and one additional microphone for the control room. Additional amplifiers would also be needed for any remote rooms. You would need a switch box with six switches on it. And, of course, you would need microphone cable for all the microphone leads;

but almost any kind of insulated wire would do for the other leads. I believe these things would "put you in business." If you wanted the buzzer system, that would be but a small item to add to the list.

The cost of these required items will be surprisingly low if you have access to your State Agency for Surplus Property. Buying through such an agency, I think you could make a setup for less than one hundred dollars, most of this cost being for the four microphones, which would probably have to be new. Also, this cost would not include the recorder or recorders, which you probably have anyway.

To buy all these items new would be a different story. This cost would exceed two hundred dollars, I believe.

As for installing the setup, my experience has been that there are usually two or three ham radio operators, or at least fellows interested in electronics, in every class. These fellows love to tear apart surplus equipment and make up things. Just one word of warning on this—I learned the hard way; once the setup is working, put your foot down firmly and allow no changes to be made without your explicit approval. Otherwise every year the new fellows will have new ideas on how the system ought to be set up; and your system will be in pieces most of the time, and never dependable.

This is my approach, as of today, toward a method of teaching speech skills as I feel such skills must be taught. With this arrangement, every student gets to "use the typewriter" every class. This system is a reality at St. Mary's Seminary; and I believe that it is producing results, encouraging results—in spite of certain necessary limitations. I also feel that there is still more that can be done to teach speaking skills more fully, and that is —as you may have already thought yourself—using closed circuit television in this same basic setup. This is still in the "dream stage"; but steps have been taken in this direction. Perhaps, God willing, at some future convention I will have the privilege of speaking to you again and reporting this "dream" as a reality. But until such a time, I feel that closed circuit radio, used only to monitor or to monitor and make corrections, along with class division and subdivision, are practical methods of teaching speaking skills—fully, of teaching skill—fully. The pause is important.

# Should We Missionaries Moderate Our Sermon On Sin and Guilt?

Rev. John A. Treinen, C.S.S.R., St. Louis, Mo.

When this paper was assigned to me my first reaction to it was "It this a trick question? Is someone laying a trap for the missionary of today?"

For if my answer were to be a categoric NO, then, would I be considered behind the times of Freud, Jung, and Stern? Am I not aware that alcoholism, the refined name for drunkenness, is a sickness, like pimples or cancer and therefore outside the order of morality and not to be shouted down from the pulpit? Don't I realize that frequent masturbation is just a phase of physical and psychological growing up, and therefore, not to be loudly or publicly reproved? Shouldn't I know that fear and shame do often seal the lips of a lustful penitent, and that therefore, the wise old saying "If you are not afraid to do it, you should not be afraid to tell it" is now unscientific and therefore obsolete? Am I not old enough to know that the homosexualist is sick, and that his perversion is by no means voluntary, and that therefore this poor freak of nature needs not warning and absolution but only pity and understanding?

Have I not heard that subconscious drives, unknown to because even unmentioned by St. Thomas are a fairly common cause of human misbehavior—drives of such a force and nature as to greatly diminish if not destroy human responsibility? Don't I know that a child can be so terrorized by feelings of guilt about sin so as to make it an adult neurotic? And if so—are not its parents and guardians the sinners who should be denounced?

Haven't I read over and over again that if we would destroy the notion of sin we would abolish all guilt? And are not our present sociological pressures so severe that the minds of men are confused and their emotions are strained to the breaking point?

And yet, if my answer is in the affirmative, if I were to say that we

missionaries should moderate our sermons on sin and guilt, then to what a sorry pass we have come!

Are we to tear up St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians that so categorically threatens and excoriates the incestuous Corinthian? And what of that merciless scream to the same Corinthians, "Do not be mistaken: no drunkard, no adulterer or fornicator, no homosexualist, no extortioner, no unjust shall inherit the Kingdom of heaven."

What am I to do with the paralyzing words of Christ "If thy right eye scandalize the, pluck it out—and if thy right hand scandalize thee cut it off—for it is better . . . ."

St. James gives us the answer to these questions: "God allows no man to be tempted beyond his strength, but makes with temptation issue that he may bear it." Apparently, neither Christ nor St. Paul moderated or relented or capitulated when they met sin head on!

What then is the answer to the question "Should we missionaries moderate our sermons on sin and guilt? Perhaps if we inquire into the meaning and function of a missionary we may arrive at a workable answer.

What is a missionary? A missionary is not a casuist in the pulpit making hair-thin distinctions in favor of the defendant. He is not the counsellor, the lawyer for the defense. A missionary is the Divine District Attorney for the absent plaintiff—Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

A missionary is a priest, specially trained by the Church, and sent by God to do a special work, viz. to preach as masterfully as he can, to every creature, the Eternal Truths, all of them, as first preached by Christ.

He mounts the pulpit only once every five or ten years in a given parish. He takes for granted that his audience is made up of human beings, normal men and women—people who have the use of reason, knowing right from wrong—and who have a sense of responsibility to God for their actions.

He is now all set to preach his sermon on sin. For he knows there is sin in the world. He knows people are missing Mass on Sunday, eating meat on Friday. He knows there is drunkenness and rioting, uncleanness and injustice. He knows that some people mix wives as readily as they mix drinks. He knows, too, that these evils are on the increase: that more people are doing more sinning, that even our children who should still be playing with dolls and toys are playing with each other at the game of sin.

And the missionary knows the way of sin. For he hears as clearly as if it were spoken today, the shocking reason given by the late Pope Pius XII: "The world has lost the very idea of sin."

Hence the missionary is convinced that surely now, at this extra-

ordinary time of grace, now when he is called upon, if ever, to preach Christ Crucified, he must be a master-artist, a master-craftsman. He must be the voice of God "that is like a fire." His word must be like a "hammer that breaks rocks."

And now, you ask, "Should he moderate his words on sin?"

If by moderate you mean for him to cut away all useless exaggerations; if by moderate you mean for him not to ram sin down the throats of his hearers as if the entire audience were the world's vilest and foulest refuse; if by moderate you mean for him not to accuse every man and woman of having violated every commandment every day of their life—then I say he should moderate.

But if by moderate, you mean for him to soft-pedal sin, to be merely matter-of-fact about its malice and frequency; if by moderate you mean for him to tell one iota less than the whole ugly truth about sin—then I say he should not moderate. (**see examples on last page)

But here, an objection may be raised. "What of the poor fearful, scrupulous and neurotic people in the audience? Won't the terrors of sin terrorize them the more and possibly even create uncalled for guilt and anguish? Possibly so. But such effects are not willed, they are merely permitted on the principle of double effect.

The sermon is aimed at and dropped by intention and direction at the target: the real sinner. And if a few innocent non-combatants are hurt, their harm was by no means intended. And here I believe the missionary has a distinct duty. In order to make sure that this number of innocents be as few as possible, the missionary should warn the parish priests to keep the scrupulous and neurotic parishioners from the mission—or at least, let them try their best to keep such penitents from applying too literally, this sermon to themselves.

Let the missionary then unveil the horns and tail which is sin. Let him in sweat and trembling, describe the monument and its victim, the first Red Cross built by sin, let him point to the jaws of hell slowly opening to devour the guilty, unrepentent sinner.

But don't let him stop there. For now as his Master before him, he

**If by moderate, you mean for him to skim lightly over the hell-punishment God inflicted on the angels for their sin—and to ignore the penalties of sweat and labor, of thorns and thistles, of pain and death that come through sin to our first parents, then I say he should not moderate.

For in the pulpit the missionary as the modern prophet of God, is also told by God: "Cry out and cease not to make known to Israel its sins and to the house of Jacob its crimes."

must open wide the heart of God, and let flow from It in golden torrents the mercy, the pity, the love of God for the sinner—a love that forgives and forgets, a love that lifts up and heals—a love that soothes and caresses the sinner—if only he will whisper in his heart: "O Father, I have sinned before heaven and before Thee—have mercy on me."

For the missionary, like Christ, does not want to extinguish the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. He only wants the Prodigal to give up living on the husks of swine and to return to the warmth and love and treasures of His Father's House!

# The Ideal Adjunct To a Speech Course In a Minor Seminary

Rev. John B. Hagerty
St. Mark's Seminary
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## I. COMPETITION, A VITAL FORCE IN LEARNING

The day after the Soviets launched Titov into space, I was preaching at a parish in a small Pennsylvania town. I took the occasion to point up the full import of the Russian feat, particularly its meaning in a possible third world war. After Mass an elderly lady came into the sacristy and said, "Father, I listened carefully to your sermon and you sounded just like President Kennedy."

We must be wary about accepting laymen's praise for our preaching. It is well-meant, but frequently exaggerated. I was struck by this woman's comment, however, not because she praised a sermon (I think), but because she compared a Priest with a President. Prescinding from the theological differences between the two states of life, I must say that her evaluation reconvinced me that our people are not satisfied with Father's Sunday sermon unless it compares favorably with the best speeches they see and hear over television and radio.

We all believe in improving our speaking abilities, else we would not be here. But we must improve not only according to our own standards, but according to secular standards as well. I believe that the National Catholic Forensic League offers that chance at precisely that age when we form our speech habits—the teens. As part of the seminary program, it can challenge and motivate our students to improve where other programs may fail.

## ADVERSE EFFECTS OF AN ACADEMIC COCOON

Perhaps my tenure as a seminarian was unusual, but I can count on one hand the number of times I preached a sermon or gave a talk; add

the other hand and I can include the number of times I read in the prayer hall, refectory, and chapel.

The National Catholic Forensic League affords not only many opportunities to speak in public, but to speak under the ideal condition for young men to improve—*competition*.

So often are we inbred, and consequently suffer through wasted time trying to pull ourselves up to par with our competition: the minister, the politician, the entertainer. We cannot afford to create or remain in an academic cocoon where we completely ignore what is good by secular standards just because it is secular. If we are afraid to be as good as our competitors, then we have no business professing to be "stewards of the mysteries of God," salesmen for Christ.

## II. THE NCFL PROGRAM—BRIEF HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

The two most important speech development organizations in the country on the high school level are the National Forensic League and the National Catholic Forensic League. They derive their name from the Roman forum.

Begun humbly in 1924 when the head of an English department in Albany, Mr. Ray Carter, proposed in a letter to Mr. Bruno Jacob of Ripon College in Wisconsin the idea of extending debate competition on a national level, the NFL has expanded from the three original chapters (Albany, Chippewa Falls, and Florence, Kansas) to 1,000 chapters and over 152,000 members in 47 states. Its president today is Senator Carl E. Mundt.

In 1952, following the National Catholic Education Association convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, plans were laid for the founding of the NCFL. Mr. Walter A. Mullen of St. John's Preparatory School, Brooklyn, and Sister Mary Zoe, S.C., of Sacred Heart High School, Pittsburgh, were responsible for the ground work. Today the NCFL has grown into an enrollment of 454 chapters (schools) in 38 dioceses. Father Francis B. Schulte. Assistant Superintendent of Schools in the Philadelphia Archdiocese, is NCFL President. The League's significant motto is: "Toward Articulate Catholic Leadership."

### THE PROGRAM

Basically, forensic activity is an extracurricular appeal to the competitive spirit of youth in the following areas of speaking, listed in order of importance:

1) Debate—one-hour presentation of arguments, cross-examination, and rebuttal.
2) Original Oratory—speech of rhetorical excellence.
3) Extemporaneous Speaking—discussion of a current events topic with only 20 minutes of preparation.
4) Prepared Oratory—memorized delivery of a great speech.
5) Dramatic Interpretation—acting out of two or more character roles.
6) Student Congress—parliamentary procedure in passing bills and resolutions.
7) Humorous Interpretation—humorous selection either monologue or dialogue. With the exception of Extemp., all speeches must be a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 minutes. Extemp. is 5-7 minutes.

A point system which evaluates the rank of each student every time he competes determines when he gains membership, honor certificates, and other awards in the organization. Normally, a boy speaks 3 times at a meet, affording him a chance to acquire at least 3 points and as many as 18; 25 are needed for membership.

There must be representatives from at least two schools competing in a forensic meet, even though the number from each school may differ.

If there is a speech department, instruction in forensics will naturally come under its jurisdiction. If there is no speech department, members of the English staff may voluntarily use class time on occasion to further forensic ideals, for practice, or for demonstration. All work in forensics, however, is normally done outside of class time.

The cost is quite nominal: $.50 membership fee and $1.00 registration fee for the Diocesan Grand Tournament, held in the Spring and bringing together in competition the best speakers of the diocese. In May there is a National Grand Tournament. Expenses involved in sending contestants to the diocesan and national grand tournaments may be borne by the contestants themselves, or by the schools, or jointly by both. All forensic moderators and judges are volunteer workers.

When the program began at our diocesan seminary a little over a year ago, with the hearty endorsement of our Rector, Monsignor Richard Fitzgerald, we expected enthusiasm; the response was far better than we had hoped. Father John D. Daniszewski, diocesan moderator, presented for our faculty and student body a demonstration by some of his best speakers. Out of a total of 110 seminarians, 33 eventually weathered the

rigors of memorizing, reading, experimenting, gesturing, taping, and much constructive criticism on the part of faculty advisor and coaches.

Expecting a drop in the percentage of participants during the second year, I was quite pleased to find just the opposite. Eighty-one of 122 students enrolled in the program. May I say that I have been faculty advisor to athletic teams and have seen their enthusiasm for practice and for games. There is no doubt that the enthusiasm for forensic competition is every bit as lively—and certainly more rewarding—than for athletics. Hours of speech-selecting, voice control, and all the things that make up good public speaking present a worthy challenge to the young mind.

## ADVANTAGES

Forensic advantages are many. For the individual, there is the challenge of competitive excellence. There comes a facility in the use of the English language and a wide range in its expression. There is extensive reading of the expressed thoughts of great minds, and timely discussion of topics such as this year's debate subject, "Federal Aid to Education." There is the soundest kind of preparation for national testing programs such as the National Merit program and, later on, the College Boards. Overall, there is a growth and enrichment of the young mind, an education in poise, and a training in self-confident use of priestly tools.

For the school as well as for the individual, forensic achievement holds many benefits. It is an excellent form of public relations with the educated public and with other schools. Whenever possible, judges for the meets are secured from the community's professional and educational circles, allowing these men at the same time to see the seminary in true academic focus; they are made part of the functioning curriculum. In the diocesan finals seminarians match their skills with the best in the diocese. Here is a chance for the seminary to show how superior its program is—or ought to be. Finally, forensics is a national—prestige activity, which is rated highly by accreditating associations.

Like any activity, forensics has its shortcomings. Perhaps a gifted speaker will have his ears attuned more to his own melodic voice than to the presentation of worthy ideals. Perhaps he has his mind set on being a Bishop Wright or a Bishop Sheen before he is Father X. Perhaps the not-so-gifted speaker will become discouraged when he fails to win as many points as others. Perhaps there will be arguments among schools as to a judge's decision that "your" student came in first rather than "ours." The

important issue is not "yours" or "ours," but the important issue is—improved effectiveness in communicating the Gospel regardless of "who" wins "how many" points.

But are not these possible flaws in any activity, academic, athletic, or even spiritual?

There are objections to seminarians competing with girls in the diocesan tournament. In our diocese there is a special "district," the seminary district. Competition is limited to seminarians and, at times, to seminarians and young men from Catholic schools in the area. Only in the diocesan finals will the student for the priesthood compete with members of the opposite sex. Surely such a situation as a forensic meet is shielded from the ordinary dangers that accompany boy-girl meetings. Or perhaps pairs of venetian blinds, to be drawn shut upon every appearance of a female—even in the summertime—should become standard equipment for every seminarian.

We must look above the minutiae and see the powerful possibilities of forensic work in seminaries. In the charge of seminary authorities are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." We cannot in conscience fail to provide for them the best in every academic opportunity. For unlike the politician who gives promises, the TV salesman who sells cigarettes, the minister, who at his best, can dispense only the power of positive thinking—the priest communicates Christ's way, Christ's Truth, and Christ's Life to a pagan world. We are bound to be as effective as we can. It is my belief that the National Catholic Forensic League is the most proved instrument for this purpose.

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

> Let me conclude and summarize by quoting the NCFL Handbook: What is the need? The world today has not only ceased to be Christian; it has ceased to be human. Expediency serves for diplomacy. Filth becomes literature. Greed is business. And sentimentality passes for religion. The tools of the spokesman for all too many causes are the easy lie, the devlish half-truth, the catchy slogan, and the cruel smear. . . . To bring sincerity, honesty, and truth to such a world is a real apostolate. But to gain a hearing from men, facility in speech, accuracy of thought, generosity of heart, and zeal for souls are the indispensable requisites. These skills and attitudes should be the goal of any Catholic forensic program. Then shall we begin

to realize our vitally important motto: Towards Articulate Catholic Leadership. And who should be a more Articulate Catholic Leader than the Priest!

Perhaps many men will be a little more interested in their religion some day because of what Father has done in the Forensic League when he was a seminarian.

Thank you.

# Resolutions Committee December 30, 1961

## Fourth Annual Convention of the Catholic Homiletic Society

The committee proposes that the convention express its gratitude to:

1. Our host, His Excellency, Most Reverend Patrick O'Boyle, D.D., Archbishop of Washington;
2. Most Reverend Philip Hannon, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, who graciously represented the Archbishop at our Luncheon;
3. Most Reverend John J. Wright, D.D., Bishop of Pittsburgh, our keynote speaker;
4. Rev. Thomas V. Liske, S.T.D., for his two years of splendid service as President of the Catholic Homiletic Society;
5. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Grady of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception for providing the vestments and Mass equipment for our altar room;
6. The Dominican Students for helping with arrangements, and the Claretian Students for serving the Masses.

The committee proposes, further, that the Convention resolve to:

1. Continue to encourage members in promoting Homiletic Workshops and Regional Meetings;
2. Encourage more members, and as members, to submit articles on preaching to clerical magazines;
3. Make available in english translation articles from foreign publications on the theology of preaching.

*Chairman,* Rev. Gilbert Zlatar, O.F.M.
Rev. Joseph O'Neill
Rev. Fidelis Goodman, M.M.

# Necrology

Father Thomas D. Rover, O.P.
Secretary

Since our report in 1959 we have received notice that the following members have passed to their eternal reward:

Rev. Brendan Burns, S.A.
Rev. Xavier Cox, O.F.M.
Very Rev. Msgr. Francis T. Fergus
Very Rev. Thomas Plassman, O.F.M.
Rev. Francis Xavier Ridge, S.V.D.
Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. McNulty

# Notes

1) The address of His Excellency, Most Reverend John J. Wright, S.T.D., Bishop of Pittsburgh, delivered at the luncheon on December 28, 1961, and referred to in the Secretary's Report on page 5 of these Proceedings, was not available for publication at this time. It is hoped we will be able to include the text of this address in either the 1962 Proceedings, or in a special issue of the Newsletter.

2) Through an oversight at the luncheon all the names and table positions of those present were not obtained. If you know the name of anyone not identified in the picture on pages 42 and 43, please inform Rev. Oscar J. Miller, C.M. at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis 19, Missouri.

3) Additional copies of the Proceedings will be available at the meeting in Cleveland, December 26-29, 1962, or from the Office of the Secretary (see page 4). Copies are two dollars each.